A COMPLETE
FRANK FRAZETTA
STORY

The GOLDEN AGE of COMICS

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4
SEPTEMBER

SILVER STREAK
STORY BY
JACK COLE

DR. FATE
DC'S
MAN OF MAGIC

THE GOLDEN AGE
COMICS OF
MLJ

AN
AIR BOY
ADVENTURE

POGO
FROM ANIMAL COMICS
TO DAILY STRIP

SOME PANELS FROM AIRBOY

AHA! AT LAST! AIRBOY! NOW I CAN PROVE WHO IS THE WORLD'S GREATEST YOUTH!
HERE I COME, WEAK YANKEE AIRBOY!
HERE'S ONE NAZI THAT'LL NEVER GET OFF THE GROUND AGAIN!
THE NAZI SHIP TAKES OFF ON AIRBOY'S TAIL, AND---
HERE'S A TASTE OF HOT GERMAN LEAD!
OH! OH! HE'S WINGED US, BIRDIE!
BUT AS AIRBOY DIVES FOR HIS MARK, THE PLANE SUDDENLY SWERVES, AND HE OVERSHOOTS IT BADLY---
HA! FELL FOR IT, YOU FOOL!
WHA?? NEVER EXPECTED THAT!
AIRBOY RELEASES THE WHEELS, AND BIRDIE GETS THE NAZI SHIP IN ITS GRASP....
YOU'RE JUST STARTING TO SEE THINGS, MISTER!
WHA?!---I'M TRAPPED!! THE DEVIL---!
4
SUDDENLY THE AMAZING BIRD-PLANE STOPS, AND RISES STRAIGHT UPWARD....
I'VE GOT A COUPLE OF TRICKS MYSELF!
HEAVENS! WHAT A PLANE! IT GOES STRAIGHT UP!--- STOPS ON A SPOT!
---AND IN THE AIR---
O.K. KRAUT! I'M TAKING OVER HERE! AND YOU'RE GOING TO DO SOME WALKING ON AIR!
WHILE ON THE GROUND---
LOOK! HER PLANE CAN'T GET AWAY! HE'S CLIMBING DOWN TO HER PLANE!
VOT ARE YOU STANDING AROUND GAPING FOR? GET UP INTO DER AIR! HELP HER!

The Golden Age of Comics

September 1983 #6

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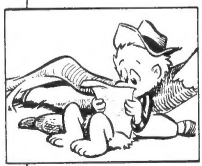

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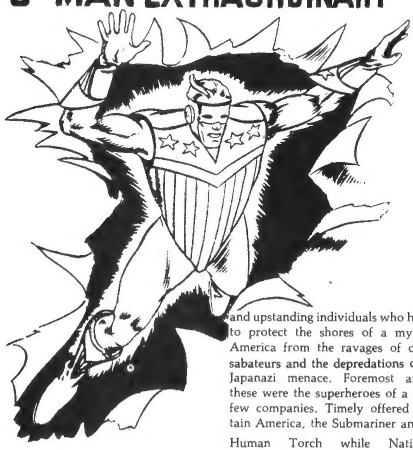
A MLJ PUBLICATION

COMICS

By Raymond Miller

The SHIELD 'G-MAN EXTRAORDINARY'



IRVIN HOWICK

Once upon a time, long, long ago there existed a four-color world of absolute and frenetic excitement. This world featured the constant exploits of a large group of colorfully costumed and upstanding individuals who helped to protect the shores of a mythical America from the ravages of crime, sabateurs and the depredations of the Japanazi menace. Foremost among these were the superheroes of a select few companies. Timely offered Captain America, the Submariner and the Human Torch while National/American offered the likes of Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman, Fawcett offered the incredible Marvel Family (including Marvel Bunny and Uncle Marvel) and MLJ brought forth such avengers as the Black Hood, The Shield, the Wizard and The Hangman.

Never before had literature seen the likes of these icons of truth and justice, and truth to tell, never again would their like be seen again, in numbers or in sheer freshness of presentation. Looking back from our jaded present the sparkle seems to be somewhat dimmed but at the time, this was something new, something unprecedented on the printed page. And while there was multitude of four-color heroes only these four companies really led the way. National merged with American and then in turn changed its name to DC, continuing many of the same characters of that by-gone age, either in identical format or with minor alterations. Timely went through several name changes and finally emerged as the leader of modern-day comic book publishing, Marvel Comics, also continuing many of the same colorfully garbed wondermen. Fawcett became the property of DC and the victim of management unable or simply unaware of how to revive and continue the Marvel Family. MLJ is unique in that it did not continue its strongmen but turned to publishing the exploits of Archie Andrews and teen-age compatriots although not abandoning its offspring entirely. Every twenty or so years the company attempts to reemerge from the doldrums of obscurity by relaunching its heroes. Twenty years ago it was as Mighty Comics. Today it is as Red Circle, and the jury is still out as to the success of that endeavor.

What is certain is that in the 1940's, a multitude of colorful, excellently crafted heroes emerged at the forefront of adventurers and it is those days and those stories which concern us here. In the mid-sixties Raymond Miller labored in the fields to bring forth a true history of this colorful period in

the history of comics. Here with very minor revisions, it is reproduced from those lost pages of RBCC.

The first title to be published by MLJ was Blue Ribbon Comics, dated Nov. 1939. There was really nothing outstanding about this new comic. It was just another addition to the slowly growing comic book industry and it wasn't even all in color. That first issue was half color with the remaining pages red and white tints.

The lead feature in the first issue and the only strip to appear in all 22 issues was Rang-A-Tang, the Wonder Dog. Looking a lot like Rin Tin Tin, it was no secret that Rang-A-Tang was the main stay even when the book featured super heroes. Rang-A-Tang appeared somewhere on the cover of every issue but #3 and #21, mostly in a circle which was part of the title logo . Inside he mostly had the longest story except for the first issue when the story only contained six pages. With the second issue the story was upped to ten pages and then to 11 with the fourth issue and the stories remained at 11 pages through #18. No other strip in any issue ran 11 pages except for the Captain Flag story in issue #22.

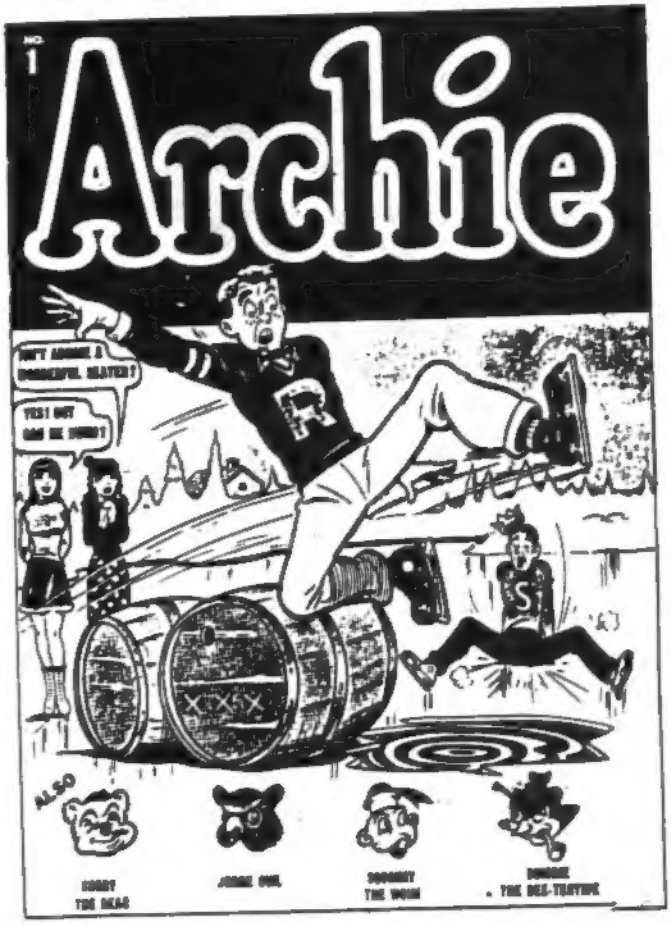
Rang was so popular that the good dog soon had his own club, called the Rang-A-Tang Club...what else? Blue Ribbon was now carrying a club page every issue listing names of new members, letters, information on how to join the club, tips on how to care and train your pet dog and other related items. Charter members of the club included Rang's author Joe Blair and the artist, Ed Smalle Jr. It only cost one thin dime to join and Hy Speed would send you a membership card, a Rang-A-Tang button and a book on "Health and Care of Your Dog and Cat."

Rang-A-Tang's origin appeared in *Blue Ribbon #1*. As the story unfolds we find Rang has been treated rather cruely by his master and like most smart animals, decided enough was enough, so he ran away. Being a stray dog means no regular meals, so he had to find his meals wherever he could, such as in an alley. Well, it so happened that one day Detective Hy Speed was attacked by some hoods in an alley Rang was looking for food. Seeing that the Detective was outnumbered, Rang joined the fight and saved Hy Speed. To show his gratitude, Hy adopted Rang and a long partnership was born.

This first story was by Norman Danberg, who may also have done the story in #2. Art in #3 was by Jack Binder and Will Harr. With #4 the team of Joe Blair and Ed Smalle Jr. took over.

But a story about a man and his dog isn't really complete unless a young boy is involved, so a young boy is added in issue #6. Hy and Rang's adventure found them guarding a movie producer from a series of attacks by the Bundonians. (The Wizard had just beat them and kicked them out of *Top-Notch Comics*). During the action, a young bit player named Richy saved the producer but Hy was shot during the fight. As he left for the hospital, he turned the case over to Richy and Rang and from that story on it was a trio: Hy, Richy and Rang. In the final story (#22) Hy, Richy, and Rang journeyed to the North Woods where Rang saved the life of a small white dog. They became real close companions and roamed the forest together. Meanwhile Hy and Richy hunted for a killer of a trapper. High on a cliff, the killer attacked Richy and when Rang and his new found pal raced to the rescue the killers struck Rang a cruel blow which momentarily stunned the great dog. Then Rang's brave little friend attacked the killer but they were too close to the edge of the cliff and killer and dog both went over the edge to their deaths. It was a very sad ending in more ways then one. Not only did the little dog die, but as it turned out, this was also the end of the trail for Rang, Hy and Richy as well because Blue Ribbon Comics came to an end with issue #22.

I can't help but wonder what all the Rang-A-Tang Club members thought when no more issues came out. There



was no hint, except in the Corp. Collins story, that #22 was the last issue, but more on that later. The club was still open for new members in #22. I can't help but wonder why MLJ didn't move the strip to another title such as *Top-Notch* or *Pep*. With a full-fledged club, Rang must have had a large following.

The other strips that appeared in *Blue Ribbon #1* didn't come off as well as Rang-A-Tang. Little Nemo, Burk of the Briny and Crime on the Run (latter drawn by Jack Cole) didn't last past *#1* (Crime on the Run did appear once more in #3). Dan Hastings, who would appear late in such Chesler titles as *Scoop* and *Dynamic Comics* and Buck Stacey, a cowboy range detective made it to #2 and #3.

The second issue introduced two more winners. The first being Corporal Collins, who would appear in all remaining issues and Bob Phantom who would fight his battles, not in *Blue Ribbon* but in *Top Notch*. Corp. Collins, Infantryman, was drawn by Charles Biro in the early issues while later stories were by Carl Hubbell. Hubbell, who replaced Biro around #8 had a style quite similar to Biro so the stories didn't suffer by the art changes. Collins and his partner Slapsie (their Navy counterparts Sgt. Boyle and Twerp, also by Biro/Hubbell, were in *Pep*) were army men, but they never seemed to stick to army rules since they seemed to be more or less loners. Popping up all over the world—off the Irish Coast in #18 and in a Northern Russian Port in #22. One could also find a number of crossover stories between Boyle and Collins in both *Blue Ribbon* and *Pep Comics*. Corp. Collins also made the covers of Blue Ribbon #3-#5, #16 and #20. His stories averaged 7 pages per issue, being upped to 8 pages in #19-#22. It was in the Collins story in #22 that it was hinted that the end had come. Collins addressed his fans with "Well gang, looks like this might be the end of our adventures together! But I want to say it was swell carousing around with you fellers. I sure hope you'll drop me a few lines sometimes" to which Slapsie added "Gee". Collins and Slapsie did appear in a couple of Boyle stories after that.

Bob Phantom made his debut in *Blue*

Ribbon #2 Dec. 1959, making him MLJ's first costumed hero. He also appeared in issue #3, before moving over to Top Notch Comics. More on him later.

With issue #4 June 1940 (there were no February through April issues) *Blue Ribbon* began to take shape adding more permanent features with Hercules, Gypsy Johnson, Tygor, Doc Strong, Loop Logan, Green Falcon and the Fox.

Selected as the number two character was that old stand-by Hercules. As most readers know, Herc was the God of Ancient Greece. In this case, he was sent back to earth to rid the modern world of gangsters, mobs and the like by Zeus. He, of course, had super strength and the other familiar powers. Sometimes he wore a blue business suit and other times white trunks with a red belt and boots. In the stories, he often returned to Mt. Olympus for advice and instructions from Zeus. He never made the cover as the main feature but did rate his picture in a circle near the title logo for a while. Both Hercules and the minor strip, Gypsy Johnson, were last seen in #8 January 1941.

Loop Logan, Air Ace, lasted somewhat longer, through #20. Doc Strong and the Isle of Right, an interplanetary strip with adventures on Mars, made it to #12. The Green Falcon was last in #15 August 1941. This strip, drawn by Ramona Patenaude, took place in the days of King Arthur. The strip could have been called Robin Hood and one would never have noticed the difference. The Green Falcon's band consisted of Tiny Tunk and Jolly Roundfellow.

Ty-Gor by Joe Blair, art by Mort Meskin, appeared in #4-#20. It was a story about a young boy named Tyrone Gorman who was raised by a tigress in the wilds of Malay. Found, he was brought to the USA by an explorer named Davis and his daughter Joan. Being un-civilized, modern man's ways were hard for Ty-Gor to adjust to and this caused all kinds of trouble, and good deeds such as saving two children from a burning house in #10 or fighting Bundists (Nazis) in #14. By #18 the art was by George Storm and Ty-Gor was on his way back to Malay with his Guardians, to confuse the Japs, no doubt.

Blue Ribbon's longest-running costumed hero was the Fox. The Fox's origin, if you can call it one, was in issue #4. Paul Patton, who was a photographer for the Daily Globe was always goofing up his shots of crimes, so he rigged up a camera to his belt to take pictures that would convict criminals and put on a fox costume to fight crime. (I wonder if Peter Parker read this story). The artist was Irwin Hasen on the earlier stories with King taking over with #11. Hasen's Wildcat at DC, looked a lot like the Fox at times. Bob Montana was the artist on #18 while Bobby King was back to finish up the Fox's career in #22. Like most hero strips, the Fox also had a girl in the cast. In this case it was Ruth Ransom, Girl Reporter for the Daily Globe.

But it wasn't til *Blue Ribbon #9*, February 1941, that the book came up with a real winner. It was in that issue that one of MLJ's most popular strips made its debut in the form of the Royal *Wraith...Mr. Justice*. The story was by Joe Blair, with art by Sam Cooper. Cooper along with Al Camerata and Irv Novick, were MLJ's so-called "3 Musketeers". They certainly carried the bulk of MLJ's art on the costumed heroes, and besides they were three of the best MLJ or any publisher could ask for, so it was only natural Cooper

got the Mr. Justice assignment. When he took his time, he could deliver the super-natural with the best of them.

The origin of Mr. Justice was told twice. The first time was in #9 and then repeated (not reprinted) again in the final issue, #22. Both origins are the same although they are different stories. During the Rogers Rebellion in Scotland in the year 1040, the Rogers Clan lured Prince James of England into a secluded tower of the Rogers' Castle where they suddenly turned on him and killed him. The spirit of Prince James rose from his body, in the form of Mr. Justice. Mr. Justice then killed his murderers and his spirit floated off into eternity. Then in 1940, while the castle was being shipped to America for safe-keeping, an enemy torpedo sent the ship and it's cargo to Davy Jones Locker. In so doing, the spirit of Prince James was released from eternity to return to earth once again. In America, Mr. Justice in his mortal body met Pat Clark and her father and in stories, Mr. Justice and Pat shared many adventures together. One of their most awesome adventures was in the World of the Atoms where they once again did battle with *The Green Ghoul*. In #13 November 1941, we find that *The Royal Wraith* and Pat had trailed the Green Ghoul into Atom World where the Ghoul had trapped them in a circle of flames. These were the flames of Purgatory which no spirit or human could pass through and all seemed lost until a large Ptrerodaclyl flew over and plucked both up and deposited them to it's nest. Free of the flames Mr. Justice flew away with Pat in his arms. Meanwhile the Green Ghoul had left the Atom World and had destroyed it,only seconds after Mr. Justice and Pat had escaped from it. Back on Earth, in a battle royal, Mr. Justice defeated the Green Ghoul.

Throughout the Royal Wraith's career he had a running battle with the Devil himself and it was the Devil who was behind most of the evil beings Mr. Justice was always doing battle with.

In issue #22, March 1942, we find that one, Harold Rogers had returned to the Rogers' Castle. (No explanation as to why the castle exists is given since it was supposed to have been destroyed in 1940, but such details were not part of the forties). Since a Rogers had returned, it opened the door for a Spirit of Harold Rogers ancestor to return also. The spirit informed Harold Rogers that he must seek out and destroy the body of Prince James by fire. Then a vision of impending danger comes to Mr. Justice and he flew to the Rogers Castle and entered the body of Prince James just minutes before Harold Rogers was about to destroy the body. Seeing the dead body rise caused Harold to become panic stricken and he leaped out of a tower window and was killed. The castle burst in flames as the life of the last Rogers passed away. The Royal Wraith then deposited Prince James' body in his own family's resting place, then returned to his human form in America. A thrilling climax to the end of Mr. Justice's run in *Blue Ribbon Comics*. Mr. Justice did manage to hang on for another year by being part of *Jackpot Comics* line up.

Issue #13, June 1941, introduced Penny Parker, a female private eye, who would disappear after #15, and a new superhero called Inferno, The Flame Breather. Inferno had shared some adventures with Steel Sterling in *Zip Comics* before striking out on his own. He first appeared in the Steel Sterling story in *Zip #11*. In *Zip #12* he went to jail and in #13 was recommended for parole. He was not in costume in these stories, but in *Blue Ribbon* he was decked out in a bright red and yellow costume. While he was somewhat stronger than the average man, his main asset was that he was able to breath fire. The art on the stories contained some of Paul Reinman's better efforts. Inferno was last to be found in #19, December 1941.

Then came *Blue Ribbon #16*, September 1941, and the introduction of one of MLJ's best costumed heroes, and one of their most short lived ones as well—the colorful *Captain Flag*. As Howard Keltner once wrote, most costumed heroes start out at the top and then taper off into run-of-the-mill fare, but it can be said of Captain Flag that he was one of the few who improved with each succeeding story. Had he not been snuffed out of existance by the abrupt folding of *Blue Ribbon* after #22 (which gave him only seven brief appearances) who knows what heights he may have reached as time passed by?

Captain Flag first appeared in the last story in #16, a nine page origin story, and he remained in that tail end spot till #17. With #18, he was moved into the lead spot and with #19, his stories were upped to ten pages as he took over the cover. Since #16 he had shared it with Mr. Justice. With #22, he was upped to eleven pages, so he went out in a flash of glory.

The stories were written by 'Joe Blair

and the art was split betweeen Lin Streeter, who did issues #16, #19-#22, and Bobby King, who did #17 and #18.

In the origin story, a master criminal called *The Black Hand* had captured an inventor, John Townsend, in order to get certain important plans from him. When he wouldn't co-operate, Townsend's worthless, playboy son Tom was kidnapped so as to force his father to talk. When the father still refused to talk, The Black Hand, in a fit of rage, choked the life out of him with his diseased claw-like right hand. Still in a rage, he turned to the young Townsend, who he had been torturing, with the same thought in mind. Before he could carry out his second murder, a great giant eagle, which had lost it's way in the darkness of the night, crashed through a window into the room, and in the confusion that followed, the bird, in panic, fastened it's talons onto the first thing it touched, which was Tom Townsend's trousers and flew off into the night with him. During the next few days, the eagle brought Tom food and he slowly regained his strength, strength greater than he had ever had before. Then one day the great bird returned, not with food, but with an American Flag. Taking this as some sort of omen, Tom made a vow against evil in all forms, made a costume out of the flag and thus was born Captain Flag. With the giant eagle, whom he named Yank, he set out to seek the Black Hand, and found him in an old shack. During the fight that followed, a lamp was knocked over. Captain Flag escaped, but the Black Hand didn't or so Captain Flag thought, for he returned in the next issue, and the next, before he disappeared, only to return in issue #21 and finally #22. In a battle at sea, on a freighter, The Black Hand finally ended his reign of terror at the end of a rope. What adventures await Captain Flag now?"Watch for him in the next issue of *Blue Ribbon Comics*" were the words that appeared in the last panel. Readers are still waiting and watching.

Why the editors chose to drop *Blue Ribbon* after only 22 issues is still a mystery. It had good stories and art, two top notch super heroes in Mr. Justice and Captain Flag and a good dog strip in Rang-A-Tang but looking over MLJ's over-all history at that time it was apparent the publishers wanted to change their image. They either saw no future in the super hero, their books were not selling well, or they preferred a lighter fare. Whatever the problem, the lighter fare won out with the likes of Archie and company because soon after *Blue Ribbon* was dropped, other MLJ titles started to add more and more humor strips.

One could see *Blue Ribbon Comics* was in some sort of trouble when issue #20 appeared on the stands. A weird type of tale called "Tales from the Witch's Cauldron" had replaced Inferno. Then came #21 and more changes. Now two True Life Stories had replaced Tygor and Loop Logan. But even this change could not save *Blue Ribbon* and it was only Corporal Collins who realized that he had just appeared in his last adventure and not even Captain Flag, The Fox, Rang-A-Tang or the Rang-A-Tang fan club hinted that they were on their way to limbo. So with issue #22, March 1942, *Blue Ribbon* was laid to rest.

TOP-NOTCH

Unlike *Blue Ribbon*, *Top-Notch #1* was a full color comic from cover to cover and featured MLJ's first costumed hero, The Wizard, the Man with the Super Brain. As Howard Keltner once said, "even though the Wizard did not wear a costume till issue #7, he still must be classified as a superhero". Starting out looking a great deal like Mandrake the Magician complete with tuxedo, high hat, cape and an added red mask, Blane Whitney was ready to start his career as a crime fighter.

Blane Whitney had inherited a heritage of greatness and had trained himself until he was a mental and physical giant and, in time, he possessed the greatest brain-power on earth. Whitney was the head of a newspaper empire although this was never really played up and in later stories it wasn't even mentioned at all. After a while, the "Super-Brain" was also all but forgotten. During his early days, The Wizard fought international spies but as time went on The Man with the Super-Brain devoted more of his time to fighting domestic crime. Using his Super-Brain, he was able to see visions of things that were happening many miles away. As it was, the strip was definitely going no place, so a change was due and this change started to take place with issue #5, May 1940.

In *Top Notch #5* a new threat to the USA is uncovered. As the story opened, Blane Whitney was shown being blown up as he lifts a phone. With his Super-Brain he sees a plot against the USA. A group of plotters called the Mosconians are planning to attack Washington DC. In a vision, The Wizard sees his brother Grover in trouble after the plotters house is bombed by mistake by their henchmen. Blane wants to go to his rescue, but Grover transported a message to him to move onto Washington and forget about him as the plotters are ready to attack the Capitol. The Wizard then races to the FBI and there meets MLJ's number one star, The Shield. The Shield had not been around as long as The Wizard because *Pep Comics* started later than *Top-Notch* but The Shield, like Superman, Batman, Captain America and others before and after him, proved to be a best seller from the start. It never hurt to guest star your #1 hero in the revamping of a less popular hero, so it was only good business to bring The Shield in at this point. After this historic meeting, The Wizard is sent off to Annapolis and West Point while The Shield remained in Washington. The Wizard proceeded to break up the plot at Annapolis, then moved on to West Point where he and Cadet Keith Kornell (another character appearing in *Top-Notch*, better known as The West Pointer) broke up a bombing attack and saved General Woods. After this, The Wizard's Super-Brain gets a new vision of his brother Grover being gassed by the Mosconians. Racing to his aid, he rescues his brother and pulls the plotters house down.

In issue #6, The Wizard and his brother talk over the spy activities. In another vision he sees new plans by the Mosconians to attack. The rest of the story reads like a full scale war with The Wizard fighting Mosconians everywhere and saving a city and the army. He then sends his brother a

message to have the US Fleet go to the Pacific coast to meet the Mosconian's invasion forces, heading for the coast himself.

In *Top-Notch* #7, August 1940, the full change in The Wizard begins. The Wizard encountered the invasion plan of California in still another vision. He saw the Mosconian headquarters, which were in Canada near the Washington state line. He attacked the head quarters and for the first time

came face to face with the Mosconian leader known as the Master Mind. Caught off his guard, The Wizard is blinded when the Master-Mind escaped. Then, as Blane Whitney, he goes back and has an operation on his eyes. It was touch and go as The Shield takes up the battle in The Wizard's place. Meanwhile, the Master-Mind, thinking The Wizard is out of the fight for good, starts plotting anew. Now recovered, The Man With the Super-Brain sees the new plot. This time he wanted to be prepared before the battle. Returning to his lab, he invented a costume (much along the lines of Superman's) which would make him invulnerable against any new threats. With The Shield at his side, he prevented the new invasion of California and captured the Master-Mind. The Shield and The Wizard then shook hands as the Mosconian threat was at last over.

There was to be one more major change in The Wizard's career. In #8, September 1940, the story opens as a young shoeshine boy sees come crooks run down a man. The crooks spot the boy and go after him in order to shut him up. The boy puts up a pretty good fight and is rescued by The Wizard who sort-of adopts the boy and trains him as his aid, revealing to him that he is really Blane Whitney. The boy was then given a costume and named Roy, The Super Boy. If any of these changes in The Wizard's career, the new costume and a young helper, were good enough to save *Top-Notch Comics*. it would never be known because with issue #9, MLJ introduced their most popular hero next to The Shield, The Black Hood, Man of Mystery.

Most of the Wizard stories were written by Harry Shorten and Bill Woolfolk while the art was by Edd Ashe, Al Camereta and Paul Reinman.

Unlike most of the MLJ heroes, The Wizard and Roy had no recurring villains. They and their friends Jane Barlow and Moe the cabbie fought a so-called vampire in #14, The Purple Mafia in #19, Voodo in #21, Nazis in #22 and The Jingler in #26, before finally leaving the pages of *Top Notch* with #27, May 1942.

It was with *Top-Notch* #9, October 1940, that the real star was introduced. "The Man of Mystery," The Black Hood, not only made his debut in #9 but took over the lead spot and the cover as well. He only appeared solo on two covers, #10 and #27. All other covers he shared with either The Wizard or Roy or both up to #27 and after that issue he shared them with Pokey Oakey and the other comical characters through #34, #41 and his last cover #43.

The stories were credited to either Editor Harry Shorten or Cliff Campbell while all the art was done by Al "Camy" Camerata. The stories in *Top-Notch* 9-27 were all 14 pages except for those in #19, #26 and #27 which were 13 pages. The most pages The Wizard ever had was 13 in #7 and #8.

The Man of Mystery had much going for him. Al Camy's art, story plots far above the standards for 1940 and a variety of villains. Foremost on this list was The Skull. The original Skull, since The Black Hood started some six months before Timely's *Captain America*. The Black Hood, in other words, had it made. He was a hit at the time MLJ was reaching its highest point of production.

The story began, where a million others had begun, on the streets of New York. A few minutes before midnight found patrolman Kip Burland checking the Woodrow Mansion before finishing patrolling his beat for the night. Arriving at the mansion, he spotted an intruder and discovered that the intruder was not just a man, but more like a skeleton, which was the first meeting between Kip and The Skull. Seeing a man who looks like a skeleton is enough to stun anyone and The Skull made good use of Kip's sudden shock by slugging him and placing stolen jewelery in the unconscious patrolman's hand. He then blew Kip's police whistle and beat it. Shortly, two of Kip's patrolman buddies found him and seeing the jewelery, had to turn him in. Kip had been framed, but good. The chief of Police believed him, but the newspapers blew the thing all out of proportion. Kip's badge was taken away, he was arrested and let out on bail.

Out on bail, Kip decided the only way to clear himself was to find The Skull, which he did one night during a warehouse robbery, a meeting that ended with Kip being taken for a ride, and his body riddled with bullets as he was dumped out of the car. Nearby, an old man known as The Hermit, heard the shooting and discovered Kip's body. During the next few months, The Hermit nursed Kip back to health, tells him that he was once a sheriff, but The Skull had also framed him. He tells Kip everything he knew about The Skull. Kip also went into training, training his mind and building his

strength for beyond what they had been. Then, with a costume, The Black Hood was born. Later, The Black Hood is living in New York under an alias, since Kip was now wanted for both larceny and bail jumping. In New York, The Black Hood met Barbara Sutton when he battled The Skull at a masquerade party held by the Suttons.

The battle between The Black Hood and The Skull continued in #10 and in five more stories, the final meeting taking place in#19, September 1941. The Black Hood finally accomplished his mission. The Skull was finally captured, but it wasn't easy, as he had more than one trick up his sleeve. In #19, the old Hermit paid The Skull a visit in prison and told him he would help him to escape if he would sign a confession that would exonerate Kip Burland. The Skull agreed and once freed turned on The Hermit giving him a mild injection which turned The Hermit into The Skull's double. Finally The Black Hood catches up with him and The Hermit gave The Black Hood the confession which exonerated Kip Burland.

Around this time, the role Sarg. McGinty was starting to be given a bigger build up. McGinty was starting a one man vendetta to capture The Hood. In issue #24, McGinty actually put The Hood behind bars, which was more than Barbara Sutton could put up with. She started writing an expose on The Hood, which more or less made The Hood a hero to all but McGinty.

Being MLJ's second most popular hero, The Black Hood was not dropped after #27, the final issue of the original *Top-Notch Comics*. When #26 appeared, the whole comic book was revamped. The title was now *Top-Notch* (in small letters) *Laugh Comics* (in bold letters). Gone were all the costumed heroes except The Hood. Instead of an adventure comic, it was now a humor comic. Still this did not effect the Black Hood stories. The mundane and eerie settings were still there, although The Hood had lost both the lead story and Al Camy's art.

Camy was replaced by Sam Cooper who was no stranger to The Hoods eerie atmosphere having done the equally weird Mr. Justice stories in *Blue Ribbon Comics*. By now, The Black Hood was appearing in both the pulps and on radio. Later artists were "Red" Holmdale and Clem Harrison. The original Dark Knight was last to be found in *Top-Notch Laugh #44*, February 1944, before moving into *Pep Comics*.

The character who appeared in more issues of *Top-Notch* than any other character was Kardak, The Mystic Magician. This strip appeared in #1 and#2 as The Mystic, missed #3 and returned in#4 as Kardak. Kardak not only made it through #27 but through *Laugh #29* as well. Kardak was from the same mold as Mandrake, Zatara and the rest of the magicians. Like Mandrake, Kardak had a giant size friend and his power or magic came from hypnosis. Many artists worked on the strip including Ed Smalle, Paul Reinman, Bob Montana George Strom and Lin Streeter.

Two long running strips were Wings Johnson in #1-#27 (called Air Patrol in #1 and #2) and Keuth Kornell also in #1-#27 (called The West Pointer in 1-6). Wings Johnson of the Air Patrol and his pal Henry Higgins was a pretty good air strip because it's artist Ed Smalle knew how to draw airplanes and knew which planes were which as many of the planes he drew are listed somewhere in the strip. Drawing good aircraft was a problem many artists, and that includes some of the best, were not able to lick, but a few guys like Smalle, Al McWilliams and Lee Elias were really good at it. Wings Johnson was a pilot in the RAF so most planes were either British or German.

Keith Kornell spent most of his time fighting on the home front. While he was in the army, his role seemed more like that of a National Guardsman in all the stories. The art was by Nick Zuraw with Bobby King taking over shortly after #14.

MLJ's first "real" costume hero was Bob Phantom who made his debut in *Blue Ribbon #2* December 1939, a month before The Shield and The Comet started in *Pep #1*. After appearing in *Blue Ribbon #2* and #3, Bob Phantom moved into *Top-Notch* with issue # 3, February, 1940.

Billed as "The Scourge of the Underworld, Bob Phantom had no origin. His secret identity was that of Broadway columnist Walt Whitney, who was always ribbing Captain Casey, a local Police Officer, both as Bob Phantom and Whitney. Whitney was always getting booted out of Casey's office, but the heckling kept up. The so called feud was a friendly one. Bob Phantom's powers were much like Timely's Vision. He appeared and disappeared for good after *Top-Notch #25*, March 1942, making him one of MLJ's first costumed heroes to be dropped in 1942. More artists worked on Bob Phantom than on any other MLJ hero. Irving Novick did him in #4, Gerry Thorp in#5 and #8, Bernie Klein in #9, #10 and #12 and Bobby King in about every issue after #12 with Romana Patendue in #18.

Top-Notch's fourth costume hero and one of MLJ's more popular second string heroes was The Firefly. Harley Hudson was a chemist and a bioligist who spent a lot of time studying insects and their muscular coordination, such as ants carrying great weights and grasshoppers jumping great distances. After two years of study and research, Hudson masters these feats himself, even to the point of staying under water for long periods of time. He then decided to become a crime fighter. When he saw a firefly he said he would become a Firefly and light up the darkness of the underworld. So the Firefly was born. Many of his stories bordered on the macabre. In #14, he fought a mad doctor called "The Cat". in #19, he fought a mad scientist who injected a growth serum into birds and animals causing them to grow to enormous sizes. The Firefly had his hands full with larger-than-automobile-sized rates. In #22, he pitted his wits with The Shark-Man

and in #26, it was a scientist who could shrink humans. It was in #24 that we find the weirdest story of all. The story is reminiscent of the story, "Three Skeleton Key" better known as "The Rats". A freighter on which Harley Hudson was a passenger came upon a weird looking deserted vessel at sea. Pulling alongside, the ship's crew prepared to board the vessel when suddenly, thousands of ferocious rats raced across the gangplank, overrunning the freighter. The rats were controlled by The Pied Piper, a bizarre murderous creature who played a pipe or flute. The rats attacked, but The Firefly spotted The Pied Piper and his music that controlled the rats. In the fight that followed, The Piper lost his flute and the rats attacked him, but The Firefly threw kerosene on the rats and set them and the deserted ship afire. The Pied Piper and his rats went down in flames with their ship.

Art on The Firefly was by Bob Wood in #8-#11. When Wood left MLJ, along with Charles Biro, for Lev Gleason and Comic House, the art was taken over by Bob King, who did most of the remaining stories. The Firefly vanished with the rest of the serious strips after #27.

Other strips appearing in *Top-Notch #1-#27* were Scott Rand, "On the World's of Time" and Swift of the S.S in#1-#3; Lucky Coyne in #1 (who later appeared in the Dynamic group); Dick Storm #2-#8; Stacy Knight, MD #3,#4; Galahad, the classic Galahad from King Arthur's time in #5-#11; Streak Chandler and Shanghai Sheridan in #5-#8. Fran Frazer, Girl Reporter for the Picture Magazine *Strife* and her partner Newspaper Reporter Hal Davis appeared in #9-#25. The St. Louis Kid, a boxing story starring Jim Jennings, was in #12-#27 with art by Bob Montana and George Storm.

The route of *Top-Notch* seemed destined to follow that of *Blue Ribbon*. Just as *Blue Ribbon* started to change it's lineup with issue #20, *Top-Notch* started the same thing with #26, April 1942. Gone was Fran Frazer and Bob Phantom and in their place, True Life Stories and the first humor strip Snoop McGook, the Soupy Sleuth. No further change came about in #27, but there was to be a big change with #28. A new hero, The Web, was to make his debut, but this never even came about. Instead there was almost a completely different book. The new issue, #28, July 1942, had a new title logo, *Top-Notch* in small letters and in large bold letters *Laugh*. Gone were all the serious strips but The Black Hood, Kardak (who would last through #29), and Hall of Fame (from *Blue Ribbon* would appear in #28-#32) and in their place appeared a bushel of humor strips led by the Don Dean creation, Pokey Oakey of Catfish Creek. Pokey was the Shriff of this hillbilly settlement in a strip right out of the same mold as Lil' Abner. Pokey Oakey was now the main character and the main part of the cover as well, although The Black Hood did appear on the covers of #28-#34, #41 and #43 with the rest of the humor characters and it was a far cry from the covers he appeared on in issue #9-#427. The Black Hood even lost the lead story to Pokey, although he did lead off in issues #28, #30, #32, #35, #37, #40. For the most part, the Black Hood was lost in the middle of a slap stick magazine. This was almost the same as finding an EC story in the middle of *Millie The Model*. Still, his stories seldom went under 9 or 10 pages, even up to his last story in #44, February 1944. The other humor strips besides Pokey Oakey, were Senor Siesta, South America's screwiest citizen by Don Dean; Gloomy Gus The Homeless Ghost by Red Holmdale; The 3 Monkeyteers who were Yehuda, Small Fry and Sassafras; Percy; Dotty and Ditto by Bill Woggon; and one of MLJ/Archie Publications most popular humor strips, Susie. Susie was the forerunner of such strips as My Friend Irma, Millie the Model and Torchy.

After issue #44, the words "Top-Notch" were dropped and the book ran through #48 as *Laugh Comics*. Then with #39, Spring of 1949, the book once again changed titles, this time to *Susie Comics* and ran till #100 in 1954. A new incarnation is still published.

The Shield was by far the most popular superhero MLJ ever produced and one of the all-time most popular superheroes of the '40s. Between the time he first appeared in *Pep #1* and his last appearance in *Pep #65*, The Shield had appeared in a total of 99 stories. The only MLJ hero to come near that record was The Black Hood with 82 stories. No other MLJ hero even reached the 60 mark.

The G-Man Extrodinaire had his origin told twice. The first time was in *Pep #1*. Joe Higgins had sworn himself to a lifetime career of shielding our government after his father was killed in a run-in with foreign spies. Joe constucted a uniform which looked a great deal like a shield. With this costume he possessed the powers of super strength and speed and it also made him invulnerable to bullets and flame. After about six months, the origin was retold, revamped and went into much more detail.

The new origin was told in the first issue of *Shield - Wizard Comics*. Lieutenant Tom Higgins of the US Army Intelligence, received orders from his superior to supervise the loading of

continued on page 64

No. 61
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NOV. COMICS
DR. FATE

DR. FATE: MAN OF MAGIC!

By Raymond Miller

RESEARCH ON EARLY CAREER - M.C. GOODWIN

One of the original charter members of the Justice Society of America was Dr. Fate, who was also one of D.C.'s oldest heroes, making his debut in *MORE FUN COMICS #55*, May 1940 under the capable hands of writer Gardner Fox and artist Howard Sherman.

Unlike most super heroes, Dr. Fate started his career without any explanation as to his origin. But it was made clear in issue #55 that the Man of Magic had learned the ultimate secret of universal conversion of energy to matter and matter to energy. In this first story Dr. Fate was to meet both the girl in his life and a villain who would return more than once to do battle with him. The villain was the devil-like creature known as Wotan. It was during one of his battles in this premier story that he rescued the beautiful Inza Carmer from one of Wotan's henchmen and later as Dr. Fate and Wotan are in battle, Fate throws him from a high window killing him. This story, like all thru #67, was told in only six pages and was also the last story in the book. Most Spectre stories during this time (Spectre also appeared in *MORE FUN*) were ten pages in length.

Dr. Fate appeared on the cover of *MO #56* for the first time, showing him fighting Wotan. In the story, continuing where #55 left off, Dr. Fate explained to Inza that he must search the dark regions for Wotan's soul in order to be sure that he had really died. Upon entering this weird region, Fate & Inza find that Wotan still lived. After another battle, the Man of Mystery defeats and chains Wotan to the earth and he and Inza return home.

In issue 57, Dr. Fate meets and defeats the master of fire and lost souls when he appears from a cloud (he comes from a cloud in early stories) to Inza to solve the mystery as to why people are being burned to death with nothing around them being burned.

More is disclosed about the mystery man in issue 58. In the opening panel it explains—"High on a hilltop in ghost-haunted Salem stands a lonely stone tower. Some say the Vikings built it before Columbus discovered America. It has windows—but no doors. Within this strange edifice lives Dr. Fate, Man of Mystery. Possesor of lost secrets, his face is unknown but his deeds are legion where in he fights these present day sorcerers against whose Black Magic law officers are powerless."

In the story Dr. Fate reads that the *LOST BOOK OF TMOTH* containing all magic that was destroyed when Atlantis sunk, is guarded by an immortal snake at the ocean's bottom. When he flies there he finds the snake dead and the book gone. He then goes to get Inza only to find her in a building with the Penthouse floating away. They return to the tower and in a magic smoke they see who stole the book. An evil wizard called the Mage is using the book to make wealthy people bring money to him. Fate goes to him and in a battle high in the sky Dr. Fate gets the book and the Mage falls to earth, dead. Then the Man of Magic undoes the evil Mage has done and burns the book with atomic power.

In #59 Dr. Fate battles some strange beings from outer space, and in #60 he defeated some giants in the Catskills. He appeared on the cover of #61 which was his second cover appearance.

In #62 Raymond Rall, a forgotten mad scientist creates an army of robots. They attack and capture Inza, who is in turn rescued by Dr. Fate. Later in the story, Rall turns an

DOCTOR FATE AND INZA ARE ASSAILED BY THE BEWILDERED DEAD!
HE HAS RAISED THE LEGIONS OF THE STYX!
THEY'RE TAKING ME AWAY--!
MAD WITH RAGE, DOCTOR FATE BATTLES!
INZA! I'VE GOT TO SAVE HER FROM THE CLUTCHES OF THIS EVIL POWER!

THE ABOVE PANELS ARE FROM "MORE FUN" #57 (JULY, 1940)

electric beam on Fate, but Fate destroys him with flames from his hand. In #65 he battles the fish-men of Nyarl-Amen (which was reprinted in *WANTED* #3 Nov. 1972).

It was in issue #66 (reprinted in *DETECTIVE* #439) that Dr. Fate removed his Golden Mask for the first time. At the end of the story he removes it in front of Inza and tells her that some day he will tell her his story.

And the following issue—#67, May 1941 (reprinted in *JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #95* Dec. 1971) the origin of the Man of Magic was finally revealed. The story of Dr. Fate's origin began in the Valley of UR around 1920. Young Kent Nelson had accompanied his father Sven Nelson to Egypt. Sven Nelson was there to try and find out who really built the pyramids. Sven had a theory that people from another planet had landed on Earth far before history began (much like Erich Von Daniken believes today in such books as *CHARIOTS OF THE GODS*, etc). One day while exploring the Chamber of History in a temple adjacent to the pyramids, young Kent came upon a statue. A telepathic message from the statue tells Kent to swing a lever. As he does so, a white gas envelopes the statue and it becomes alive. Kent learns that the statue was really a man named NABU who had been in suspended animation for almost a million years. He tells Kent that he was born on the planet of Cilia, that he had learned the secret of molecular control of ones body. Later they discover the still form of Kent's

father, killed by a poison gas when he tried to enter a secret chamber. Kent remained in the desert with Nabu, and as the years past, he was taught ancient magics and power of levitation. Soon he was ready for a new life and Nabu then gave Kent a yellow and blue costume, and Dr. Fate was born.

This was the last six page story for Dr. Fate as with the following issue #68, he finally replaced the Spectre as the number one character in MORE FUN, not only taking over the lead spot in most issues, but having his page count increased to ten. He also replaced the Spectre as the cover feature.

Issue #69 saw Dr. Fate battling KARKULL for the first time, and he really had his hands full when both Karkull and Wotan appeared in issue #70.

With issue #72 the first of many changes to come in both Dr. Fate's costume and career arrived. The first change was to modify his helmet so that it covered only the upper part of his face. I guess the powers that be decided now that the readers knew there was a real live being named Kent Nelson under that helmet, there was no need to completely cover his face anymore.

The next big change in Dr. Fate's career came with issue #73, Nov. 1941. This was not so much with the Man of Mystery himself, but with what was now taking place in the remaining pages of MORE FUN COMICS. For almost two years Dr. Fate and the Spectre had been the only two superheroes to grace the pages of MORE FUN. With #71 some of the second string strips gave way to a new hero in Johnny Quick. Two issues later the rest of the non-superhero characters, with the exception of Clip Carson and Radio Squad would be dropped to make way for Aquaman and Green Arrow & Speedy. The latter would soon prove to be the team that sold MORE FUN during 1942-44.

In #73 Dr. Fate would meet the insidious Mr. Who, sinister Lord of the Plunderworld. Mr. Who had the amazing power to grow to an enormous size. As a kid he was somewhat of a sissy and all the other kids used to pick on him, but as he grew older he earned enough money to go to college and study the sciences. There he invented a serum called "Z" solution that would enable him to grow. At the same time he decided to collect beautiful objects and surround himself with them. He soon found that it was a lot easier and a lot cheaper to steal them so it lead him to a life of crime.

After stealing some valuable paintings from an art gallery, Mr. Who was followed to his hideout by Dr. Fate. There the Man of Magic was to fall into a trap and left at the mercy of a giant spider. But being of pure energy, Fate was able to strangle the spider with its own web. Later the reader learns Z solution can also render Mr. Who invisible. After stealing a diamond, Mr. Who eseapes in a boat only to be caught by Fate who hurls him right through the bottom of the boat. The end of Mr. Who—or was it?

Issue #74 saw the return of Mr. Who who now used Z solution to enable him to adapt to any danger instantly.

Issue #76, Feb. 1942 saw another change in MORE FUN COMICS. When the reader would open up the cover he would find not Dr. Fate, but Green Arrow & Speedy appearing in the lead story, and with #77, the Wizard Archers would also take over the cover.

In #76 Dr. Fate would encounter Michael Krugor, "Crimes Chessman" who used mortal pawns on his giant checkerboard, and in #77 the Master of Mystics stepped into a picture and into another world to fight a giant and rescue his friends Bill and Betsy. An interesting note here is, Inza's last name is Sanders instead of Carmer.

Mr. Who once again returned to do battle with Fate in #79. Now Mr. Who could also shrink to microscopic size. Mr. Who proved that he was almost a match for Dr. Fate when he was able to shrink, grow to giant size, is able to penetrate cold steel as if it were air and then in a battle with Dr. Fate, who is only normal size, compared to the giant Mr. Who, is sent sailing through the air by a kick from Mr. Who, with a sickening crash against the trunk of a tree. For the first time in his career, Dr. Fate was knocked unconscious. But in the end things were reversed as a normal size Fate tricked a fast reducing Mr. Who and flys the bum off to the pen for the next 20 years.

Now little by little, Dr. Fate's powers were being taken away. Knocked out for the first time in #79, the reader would find him unable to break his bonds in issue #80. While fighting the green faced Octopus, the Octopus appears out of his inky fog, catching Dr. Fate off guard and strangles the Man of Magic into unconsciousness and then ties him up and leaves him beside a running car to die from carbon monoxide poisoning. But regaining his wits, Fate used the whirling fan to cut his ropes.

In #81 (which was the last issue of MF to have the large title logo on the cover) Dr. Fate met and defeated the balloon faced Moon-Face in a story which finds Fate unable to fly. There was no explanation as to why he couldn't fly—he just didn't fly. The Man of Magic, in his earlier days, would never have fallen through a hole in the floor down into a deep well with no way of getting out like he did in this story. He would have just flown away the second the floor gave way. Yet he had to wait till the well filled up with water so he could swim to the top.

In issue #82's "Luck for Sale", most of the Man of Magic's powers seem to be back as he flys through the air, uses the Magic Crystal of the Ancient Chaldeans, etc, but still ends up getting knocked out once in the story.

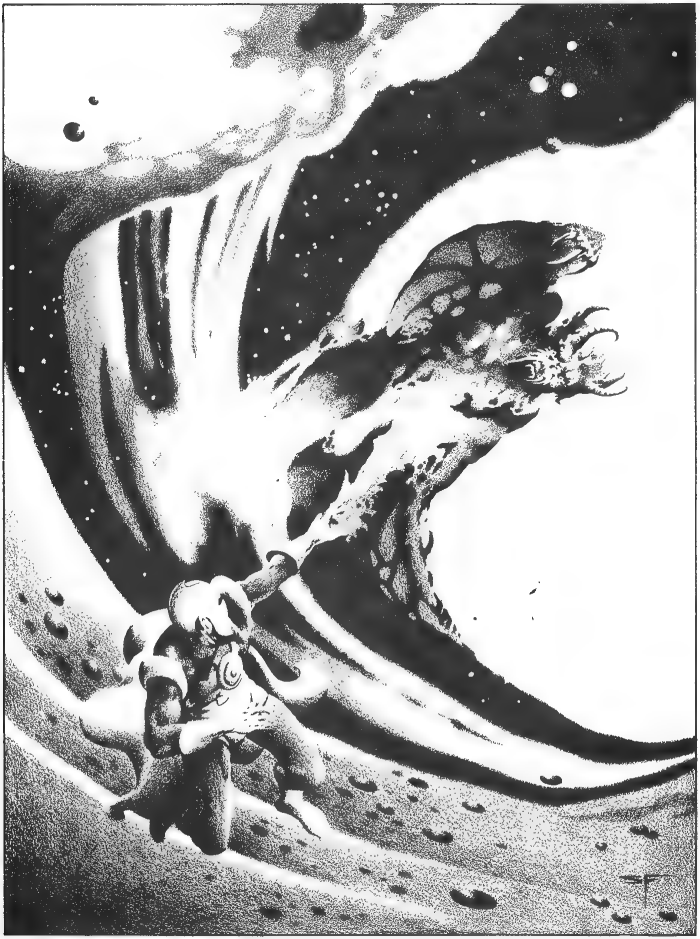
Major changes started to take place with issue #84. First the Epaulets were dropped from his costume. In #85 Ken Nelson became a physician in the space of one story and the Man of Mystery has his cape dropped. But for the first time in a long time, Dr. Fate's lonely tower is mentioned in #87.

#91 May-June 1943 saw the return of Mr. Who. This time Mr. Who used his solution "Z" on Dr. Fate, to reduce him to the size of the present day Atom and locked him in a bird cage. Even his magic powers were of no use now or at least not at that point in the story. But a few pages later he once again had his magic back although in his small size his punch was about as hard as that of a feather, but he could still fly and bullets couldn't harm him. But in the end solution Z wore off and Mr. Who once again was carted off to prison.

Hal Sherman's art disappeared after #93 with the final few issues being done by Jon Chester Kozlak. With issue#98 July 1944, Dr. Fate's career finally came to an end. And in nine more issues MORE FUN would also come to an end as far as the superhero was concerned.

Besides appearing in MORE FUN COMICS, the Man of Magic also was a member of the Justice Society of America in *ALL STAR #3-21*. He took an active part in all stories but #13 and #20. He did not appear at all in issue #13, explained away by Starman who said he was on an important mission. In #20 he only appeared in the introduction and conclusion of the story. He played no active part in the actual story. He also appeared on all covers from #3-20 except #13. Unlike in MORE FUN, his costume and powers remained the same except for the change in his helmet which was altered with #8. Like in MORE FUN, most all chapters with Dr. Fate were drawn by Howard Sherman. The only issues Sherman did not do were #6-10 which Stan Josephs did, #12 which Bernard Klein did, #19 by Jon Chester Kozlak and finally #21 which was by Joe Kubert.

In 1963 Dr. Fate made his first appearance since 1944 in *JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #21 & 22* and has made a number of appearances since in *JLA, SHOWCASE, FLASH* and other DC titles.



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POGO

FROM ANIMAL COMICS TO DAILY STRIP

Part One: Cannibalism In The Swamp

By Jeff Gorrell

In the fifties, I read Pogo books that belonged to my parents, and early in my development, I became enamored with the Pogo that appeared in the daily paper, reading it religiously from the late fifties to the early seventies. Expressions and songs from Pogo have become permanent parts of my experience as have all the Pogo reprint books become permanent parts of my collection. Thus, I was saturated with the Okefenokee mystique long before I discovered that Pogo had been a comic book character years before he became syndicated in newspapers.

Several years ago, when I first read some early "Albert and Pogo" stories in a borrowed copy of *Pogo Parade*, I was nonplussed. My expectations about the stories were based upon my long-standing association with the syndicated Pogo. What a disappointment! These corn-pone, silly, hastily drawn characters from *Animal Comics* were not *my* beloved creatures. They seemed to be distant country cousins, poor relations, pale imitations of the "real" thing. Of course, that kind of thinking is backwards. Although Pogo of *Animal Comics* is different from Pogo of Post-Hall syndication, he is no more a feeble replica than the early Beatles are an imitation of the post-Sgt. Pepper Beatles.

Besides being the product of a younger Walt Kelly, early Pogo emerges from a different tradition and is oriented toward a different audience than the later Pogo. A historical/developmental look at Pogo is called for. That means evaluating each stage of development on its own terms. However, I'm betraying my own orientation toward the latter day Pogo just by referring to the strip in his name. The early stories were about Albert the Alligator, first, and Bumbazine, the little black kid, second. Pogo, in Walt Kelly's description, was merely a "spear carrier" originally. In fact, he doesn't even appear in one of the early stories (*Our Gang 6*).

In the first *Animal* story, "Albert Takes the Cake," several of the basic motifs of the strip appear, all revolving around Albert's culinary predilections. Eating and food acquisition are funny-animal plot staples. Bugs Bunny constantly steals carrots from Elmer's garden; Tom Cat is always trying to eat Jerry and Tuffy, who are always prowling the kitchen for food themselves; Uncle Wiggily seems to go on picnics interminably; and Porky Pig is an ice cream soda connoisseur. Thus, it is not surprising that food dominates the early episodes with Albert. Furthermore, given the public opinion about hungry Alligators (to paraphrase Walt Kelly: When you starve with an alligator, the alligator starves last), making Albert a glutton is quite appropriate. A special twist to the whole food theme is to introduce the idea that Albert is a potential, if not actual, cannibal.

Cannibalism! In a kid's comic? Well, why not? It produces some of the finest humor in the early Pogo stories. Whenever Albert contemplates the possibility of eating one of the swamp critters he is quickly labelled a cannibal. This is different from the assumption, say, in "Tom and Jerry" that it is

THIS MUST BE THE ONLY TIME IN HISTORY ANYBODY COOKED A FISH DINNER AND PUT OUT A FIRE AT ONCE, POGO.
AW— TWASN'T NOTHIN'.
I GLAD YOU CRAWLED OUT OF THE BATTER 'FORE I BAKED IT, MR. FROG— SOME DAY I'LL BAKE YOU A CAKE
HOW ABOUT JUS LEAVIN' WELL ENOUGH ALONE?

natural for some animals to eat other animals... .

There is a sliding scale of what constitutes cannibalism in the swamp. Fish, for example, have an unusual status. They are fair game for consumption most of the time, while to eat land-dwelling animals is to be a cannibal. However, although fish are usually anonymous comestibles, particularly catfish, sometimes they exhibit real personalities and reactions to being the main course at community feasts. There are rules to follow. For instance, in #29, Howland Owl and Pogo alternatingly pull a particular fish from the swamp and toss him back while they argue. The fish rebels, beats Howland with the fishing pole, jumps back in the water, and says: "Nex' time make up yo' minds—is yo' fishin' or jes' hossin' around? Ah ain't got all day!"

Combining Albert's cannibalistic orientation with his penchant for swallowing things with one gulp provides material for many stories. His capacity is formidable; his gigantic mouth and reflex swallowing qualify him for being the prototype of *Jaws*. He can, and does, swallow almost anything and anybody—often accidentally. Luckily he doesn't chew and his digestion is slow.

From time to time, rescue missions and other intricate attempts for retrieving an ingested swamp animal from Albert's stomach must be organized. The varieties of possibilities are almost unending. There is even an occasion when the fire department has to be called in to extingquish a fire in Albert's stomach (#24).

Albert sometimes uses his cannibalistic tendencies as a threat to ensure cooperation. In *Our Gang #6* he, in argumentation with a child alligator named Alexander, holds Alexander by the tail over his open mouth and says: "If you don't show a little respect I is gon' drop you." Alexander has a lot of spunk. Directly into the mouth of disaster he replies: "Drop away! I hope I is tough."

Albert is not the only potential cannibal; he merely is cannibalism's strongest advocate. Since he is not alone in his delight over eating, an ambivalent attitude exists in the minds of others. In *Animal #3*, Albert speculates about the tastiness of a certain Popinjay who is expected to visit the swamp. Typical Albertian thinking: "He'll be just the right size for a pot pie— Popinjay pot pie—mmmmm!" Pogo replies: "You—you cannibal... However, it *does* sound good!" Alberts says: "I'll save you a piece."

Through the interest of all its inhabitants in food, the Okefenokee Swamp stands revealed as being a half-humanized predatory society. If Albert is capable of consuming all the other animals, so are the other animals. At one time or another, Howland Owl, Pogo, and other main characters consider the possibility of eating each other. So what keeps them from acting upon such thoughts?

Basically the creatures of the swamp form one big extended family. They plan picnics together; they hold fish-fries together; they center many of their activities around the frying pan and perloo pot. It is kind of an understood principle in the swamp that the family that eats *together* doesn't eat *each other*. Fortunately they do have fish to eat; that takes a lot of pressure off. For example, when Pogo pulls a catfish out the lake in one episode (#22), a much larger catfish rises from the water and tells Pogo: "Put back dat lil' chile catfish or ah'll whop you." Pogo complies and then complains: "Fings gittin' so humane 'round dish yere swamp us folks will have to take up eatin' mud tukles." Naturally, Churchy, the turtle, objects.

Albert is the epitome of the urge of the swamp inhabitant toward satisfaction of their stomachs over social interest. The focus in early stories is placed most upon him and upon his relationship with the rest of the swamp. He's a bully, a braggart and a gourmand. He doesn't much care what he eats as long as he eats. The rest of the creatures regularly try to reform Albert, who is the black sheep and bad influence of the family.

In *Our Gang #6*, which chronologically falls between *Animal #3* and *#5*, Albert is shrunk to the size of a pickle jar and chased by all the little animals he has tricked and terrorized in his alligatorish career. In *Animal #5*, because of public annoyance and rancor directed toward him, Albert decides to leave the swamp and go to the big city [this is my personal favorite of the early stories]. He says: "I quits! I isn't goin' to stay in this here swamp no more! Everybody always a-pickin' and a-snappin' at me — I is gon' run off an' leave you shift for yo' selves... When I'm a successful man in th' city I'll drop you a line—and I hope you choke on it." To which the usually mild-manner Bumbazine replies: "The same to you, Albert!"

Albert's encounter with human civilization is disturbing. Everybody wants to own a real live "talkin' gator" and *they* chase him all over. He decides that if he is going to be chased and hounded wherever he goes, he'd rather be chased and hounded by his

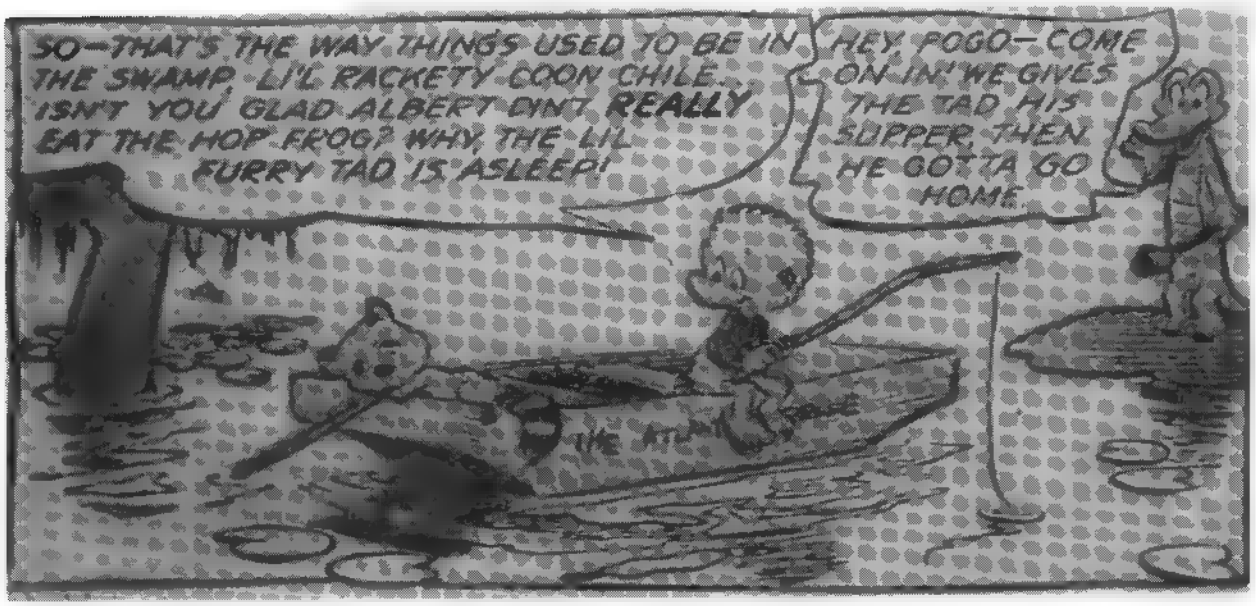
friends in the swamp. At the same time that he is heading back to the swamp, Pogo and Bumbazine are discussing how much they miss Albert and his rascality.

The early antagonism between the animals and Albert turns into comraderie in later issues, but it doesn't happen overnight. Pogo is the first person to stick up for Albert and to help protect him from the schemes of the others (#11). After some time, Albert begins to mellow in his personality and others begin to accept him for himself—treating him more as an idiosyncratic member of the community than as an outsider. This change in attitude derives, I think, from Albert's becoming a protector of the smaller creatures from attacks by outsiders. in #10, for example, he fights off a menacing tiger; in #17, he helps Pogo rid himself of his univited, unwanted cousins; in #19, he bands with others to drive out a city slicker mosquito; and in #20, he fights a bear who has invaded the swamp.

So Albert is both a menace and a protector. He comes through when people need him, but they also have to watch out for him. Efforts to rehabilitate him must be made regularly. As Pogo says, every year "Albert git mo' Alligatorish an' mo' Alligatorish", (#22), but interestingly, he says it affectionately, not bitterly.

A variation on Albert's consuming passion demonstrates the later handling of the eating motif and Albert's relationship with others. In #16, a family of mice looking for a home mistake Albert for a hollow log and climb inside his open mouth as he sleeps. When he awakes he hears voices and decides that he is haunted. Pogo, a frog, a racoon and a porcupine devise a way to rid Albert of his infestation. In the process of curing him of mice, they become trapped in Albert's stomach and have to be launched out of his open mouth. On the occasion, there is no thought of Albert as a preditor, merely as a friend with a peculiar problem. His alligatorish ways are sufficiently controlled so that the animals are willing to risk themselves around his open mouth.

The socialization of Albert, the process by which he becomes a pretty upstanding member of the community leads into new sources of stories in *Animal Comics*. He and Pogo become partners in the strip and Howland and Churchy become signifigant supporting characters after Bumbazine fades from the scene. Emphasis in the swamp shifts from Albert's eating—though eating always remains a favorite pastime—to more complex stories and use of many different characters to set the action and to develop the plot. This second phase of Pogo's career will be explored in the next installment of this column.


SO—THAT'S THE WAY THINGS USED TO BE IN THE SWAMP—LI'L RACKETY-COON CHILE... ISN'T YOU GLAD ALBERT DINT REALLY EAT THE HOP FROG? WHY, THE LI'L FURRY TAD IS ASLEEP!
HEY, POGO—COME ON IN! WE GIVES THE TAD HIS SUPPER, THEN HE GOTTA GO HOME.

AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE UNTAMED JUNGLE, MONA SAW THE THIN VENEER OF HER LOVE EXPOSED TO FORCES SHE COULDN'T CONTROL! HER MIND KEPT TELLING HER THAT SHE WAS PLEDGED TO DON BUT HER HEART KEPT YEARNING FOR THE STRANGER WHO TAUGHT HER THE MEANING OF. . .

UNTAMED Love

When Don first suggested I accompany him on a hunting safari in Africa, I was luke warm to the idea, but now that we had reached the dark continent, I felt a mounting excitement engulf me...

I KNEW YOU'D LOVE IT ONCE WE ARRIVED HERE. YOU'RE IN FOR THE ADVENTURE OF YOUR LIFE, DARLING.

I ALWAYS CONSIDERED MYSELF A HOT HOUSE FLOWER, DON. BUT THIS -- IT SEEMS SO MYSTERIOUS AND EXCITING...

YOU'RE JUST A BEAUTIFUL ANIMAL AT HEART, MY DARLING. THAT'S WHY I WANT YOU FOR MY VERY OWN.

IS THAT WHY YOU WANT TO MARRY ME, DON? BECAUSE I'M JUST ANOTHER ANIMAL YOU'VE CAPTURED?

BUT YOU'LL BE THE MOST WONDERFUL CATCH I'VE EVER MADE. I LOVE YOU, MONA--LOVE YOU VERY MUCH.
I LIKE THE WAY YOU SAY THAT DON---THAT'S WHY I'M GOING TO BE MRS. DON LONGWORTH II!
NOTHING MATTERS WITHOUT YOU, DARLING ---NOTHING!
SORRY TO INTERRUPT, SIS--BUT THE TENDER IS READY TO TAKE US ASHORE.
RIGHT WITH YOU CHARLIE!
But as we neared the jungle vastness of Africa, qualms began to assail me once more. No--it wasn't the hunting trip that bothered me . . .
DO I REALLY LOVE HIM—OR IS IT HIS MONEY THAT MADE ME SAY YES?
I MUST STOP THINKING ABOUT IT. OF COURSE I LOVE HIM--OR I WOULDN'T HAVE CONSENTED TO MARRY HIM. I MUST BELIEVE THAT.
HERE WE ARE, DARLING--- AFRICA AT LAST!
WHERE'S THE GUIDE AND CARRIERS WHO WERE TO MEET US?

TRACY SAID HE'D MEET US AT THE FIRST CAMPING SITE LATER TODAY. HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE THE BEST AND HE'S ROUNDING UP EXPERIENCED CARRIERS FOR THE HUNT.
WELL— WE'RE OFF!
It seemed that we walked endlessly that day, and when we finally made camp that night, I felt exhausted...
LISTEN TO THOSE ANIMALS HOWLING OUT THERE. IT SOUNDS EERIE!
WHERE THE DEVIL IS TRACY? HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN HERE BY NOW. THESE OTHER CARRIERS ARE NERVOUS ABOUT STAYING IN THE JUNGLE AND MAY RUN OUT ON US ANY MINUTE.
I NEVER SHOULD HAVE LISTENED TO HIM WHEN HE INSISTED WE MEET HERE. THEY TOLD ME HE WAS AN INDEPENDENT CUSS, BUT HE'S STILL WORKING FOR ME!
RELAX, DARLING. IF HE SAID HE'D BE HERE--HE WILL!
DID I HEAR MY NAME MENTIONED?
HUH?! WHO'S THAT?
BLAST IT, TRACY-- WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY SNEAKING UP ON ME? WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?
JUST THOUGHT I'D SEE HOW CLOSE I COULD COME WITHOUT BEING DISCOVERED. YOU WOULDN'T MAKE A GOOD GUARD AGAINST MARAUDERS, LONGWORTH.
I'M PAYING YOU MORE THAN WELL FOR THIS TRIP, TRACY, AND YOU HAVE YOUR GALL TAKING YOUR OWN GOOD TIME GETTING HERE.
YOU DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT WOMEN COMING ALONG!
3

THIS IS MY FIANCEE — MISS MONA TRENT. MONA--THIS IS TRACY-- OUR GUIDE.
HELLO--- TRACY.
MISS TRENT ---IT'S A PLEASURE.
Maybe it was the firelight dancing on his handsome, rugged features-- his broad chest—those keen, gray eyes that seemed to look right through me-- but I found my heart pounding violently when he touched my hand...
YOU DON'T SEEM VERY HAPPY ABOUT FEMALE COMPANY, TRACY.
FRANKLY -- I'M NOT. A HUNTING PARTY IS NO PLACE FOR FOR A WOMAN. BUT IT'S LONGWORTH'S PARTY--SO I GUESS IT'S UP TO HIM.

The following day, we started our trek deep in the interior, but try as I might, I couldn't tear my eyes away from Tracy..
WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH ME? I'M LIKE A SCHOOLGIRL WITH HER FIRST CRUSH!
Days passed---days filled with all kinds of thoughts about Tracy---but he was rigidly polite on all occasions. We had only shot some small game and hadn't encountered anything worthwhile until one afternoon.
BWANA TRACY! KING--THERE! MANY!
GET YOUR GUN, LONGWORTH-- THEY'VE SPOTTED SOME LIONS!

LIONS! I'D LIKE TO COME ALONG, DON. I PROMISE TO STAY OUT OF THE WAY.
WELL--IT MIGHT BE RISKY. BUT IF YOU WANT TO--!
STEP ON IT, MAN--THOSE LIONS AREN'T GOING TO WAIT FOR US.
The thrill of the hunt had completely engulfed me and I found myself eagerly pressing forward. But Don seemed completely unnerved and was assuming false bravado to cover it up...
GET THEM RIGHT BETWEEN THE EYES, LONGWORTH. THEY'RE MIGHTY NASTY WHEN THEY'RE WOUNDED.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME.

Tracy seemed so confident—so sure of himself—and his attitude dissipated any fear I might have had. In fact, I found myself eagerly pressing forward as if to be the first one to reach the animals...

But Don kept fingering his safety catch and wetting his lips. He was obviously frightened. When suddenly...

DON'T SHOOT YET, WE'RE NOT NEAR ENOUGH FOR A GOOD SHOT.

SHUT UP!

Before Tracy could stop him, Don had raised his rifle, took a perfunctory aim and fired...

WAIT!

PING!

YOU FOOL—— YOU ONLY WOUNDED HIM. THIS MEANS TROUBLE!

GET A BEAD ON HIM, MAN! *HURRY! HE'S HEADING FOR MONA!*

SHOOT, MAN—— SHOOT!

I--I C-CAN'T!

I could see those gaping, slavering jaws of the wounded beast and froze in terror in my tracks--unable to move--unable to scream...
GIVE ME THAT!
I-I THINK I'M GOING TO BE SICK!
YOU'RE ALL RIGHT NOW! BUT HE SURE WAS A BIG ONE AND OUT FOR REVENGE!
I'VE HAD A LITTLE MORE EXPERIENCE AT THESE THINGS THAN YOU, LONGWORTH, AND I EXPECT YOU TO LISTEN TO ME IF I'M GOING TO BE YOUR GUIDE. OR ELSE GET YOURSELF ANOTHER BOY. I DON'T WANT BLOOD ON MY HANDS.
WHY--THE INSOLENT PUP. HOW DARE HE TALK TO ME LIKE THAT? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT DEAR?
LUBAGO! GET BWANA! HURRY--ON THE DOUBLE!
I WAS ABOUT TO SHOOT, MONA--BUT HE--HE WANTED TO SHOW OFF FOR YOUR BENEFIT I GUESS. YOU'RE SURE YOU'RE ALL RIGHT?
YES, DON.
6

MONA! WAIT!
Somehow, the touch of his hand made me crawl with revulsion and I quickly turned and began to follow Tracy back to camp...

That night, as I sat alone with my confused, jumbled thoughts--thoughts that kept revolving around Tracy, I looked up and saw him standing there...
MIND IF I COME IN?
N-NO---!

I WOULDN'T JUDGE HIM TOO HARSHLY, MISS TRENT. EVERYBODY IS BOUND TO GET BUCK FEVER NOW AND THEN.
I KNOW -- AND PLEASE STOP BEING SO FORMAL TO ME, TRACY.

HE'LL BE ALL RIGHT BY THE MORNING--ALTHOUGH HE'S BEEN AT THAT BOTTLE ALL DAY. I'D HATE TO SEE YOU TWO BREAK IT UP!
I KNOW YOU WOULD, TRACY.

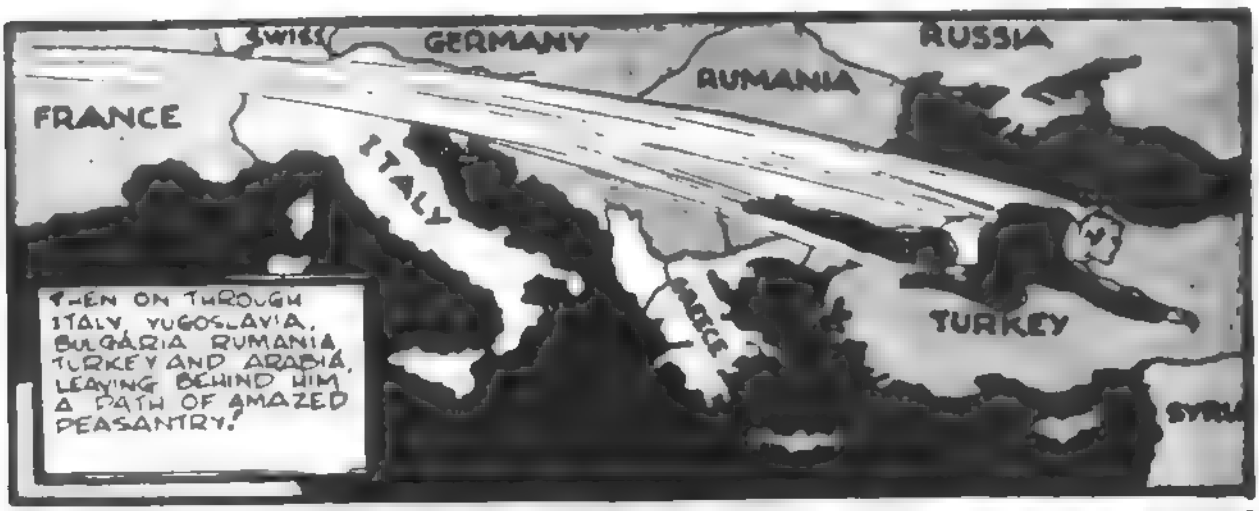
IS THAT ALL YOU CAN SAY? I KNOW --I KNOW-- I KNOW! DO YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT YOU? DO YOU KNOW THAT?

OH, TRACY-- I TRIED TO FIGHT IT!

WHEN I SAW THAT LION COMING AT YOU, I KNEW THEN THAT NOTHING ELSE WOULD EVER MATTER IF ANYTHING HAPPENED TO YOU.
I DO LOVE YOU, TRACY--WITH ALL MY HEART!
A VERY PRETTY AND TOUCHING PICTURE INDEED!
DON!
PLAYING THE BIG HERO WITH MY GIRL, EH? SHOWING HER WHAT A BIG MAN YOU ARE! BUT WHAT'S A BIG MAN GOING TO DO WITH A BULLET IN HIM?
I'M DOING A LITTLE HUNTING MYSELF TONIGHT.
PUT THAT GUN DOWN!
SURE I WILL---AFTER I GET RID OF YOU!
DON! DON'T--!
There was a loud explosion and a searing burn in my arm and then complete blackness...
Slowly, slowly—I came out of the bottomless pit to find Tracy kneeling next to me with a look in his eyes every woman recognizes...
IT WAS JUST A SUPERFICIAL WOUND, DARLING! HE'S GONE NOW--AND I GUESS PRETTY SORRY FOR WHAT HE DID. BUT WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?
STAY WITH YOU, MY SWEET---FOREVER AND EVER.
THE END

SILVER STREAK
by Milton Johns
ALL AMERICA IS AGOG AT THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE WORLD'S ACE OF SPEED, SILVER STREAK — SO MUCH SO THAT THEY DO NOT EVEN TAKE NOTICE WHEN ONE SIR CEDRIC BALDWIN CROSSES THE ATLANTIC IN RECORD TIME ABOARD HIS SUPER PLANE!
SOUNDS! — EVERYTHING APPEARS TO ME! — FIVE BLOOMIN' YEARS HI SPENDS IN PAWFECTING A SUPAH AIRCRAFT.... HI CROSS THE OCEAN IN TEN 'OURS SMAWSH ALL SPEED RECORDS FOR WHAT? — TO BE PUSHED BACK TO THE COMIC PAGE BY A BLIGHTER NAMED SILVAH STREAK!
SILVER STREAK FASTEST MAN ON EARTH (ARTHUR'S OF KNIGHTS)
PAWSTEST MAN ON EARTH! — BAH! I'LL SUE 'IM — NO, I'LL CHALLENGE THE FAKIR TO A RACE! — WE'LL SEE WHO'S THE FASTEST MAN ALIVE!
DAILY NEWS SILVER STREAK FASTEST MAN ON EARTH
PHEW! IT DOES, DON'T IT?
SIR CEDRIC DECLINES SILVER STREAK — RACE? SORRY, BUT I HAVEN'T MUCH TIME FOR THAT SORT OF THING!
WHY YOU YELLAH PUP! WAIT 'LL THE PAPERS FIND OUT THAT SILVAH STREAK IS A FAKE!
OUT THE WINDOW FLIES THE STREAK
SO HE'S GONNA GET NASTY IS HE!
HI! SAY!
THAT'S ENOUGH, YOU'LL OH!

AND WHILE WE'RE AT IT, LET'S MAKE THIS A REAL RACE — SAY AROUND THE WORLD
'ROUND THE WORLD!! ::GULP:: Y-Y-Y-YES! BUT HOW DO YOU GET TERE SO BLINKIN QUICK?
LIKE THIS—!
SIMPLE ISN'T IT?— LET ME KNOW WHEN YOU'RE READY TO START!
?????
S-SOMETHING TELLS ME HI'VE MADE A BALLY B B BAD WAGER!
DAT'S FUNNY— I DON'T HEAR NUTTIN'!
...IT WAS THE PASSAGE OF TIME... AND CEDRIC REGAINS HIS CONFIDENCE AND ON THE DAY OF THE SCHEDULED RACE, HE IS AS COCKY AND SELF IMPORTANT AS EVER!
GENTLEMEN, IF HI CAWN'T BEAT THIS PERSON HI'LL EAT MY SHIRT!!
ANY WORD FOR THE PRESS, SIR CEDRIC?
MY BOSS!
AND WHAT HAVE YOU TO SAY, SILVER STREAK?
SIMPLY THAT SIR CEDRIC COULDN'T HAVE PICKED A NICER SHIRT
A HUSH FALLS OVER THE CROWD AS THE STARTER RAISES HIS PISTOL —— THEY'RE OFF!— OR RATHER, SILVER STREAK IS OFF, LEAVING SIR CEDRIC AT THE POST!
WELL, CHEW MY CHICLE!
HE'S OUTTA SIGHT, ALREADY!
STRAIGHT OUT ON THE OCEAN RUNS THIS ACE OF SPEED!
WHAT WUZ THAT?!
A TORPEDO! HIT FER SHORE!
PARDON THE WET DUST!
IN NO TIME HE IS OVER EUROPE
HITLER'S WAR! MIGHT'S WELL PUT IN MY TWO CENTS WORTH!
HIMMEL!
WAS? ISS?
THAT'S GIVING 'EM A RIDE!
SCORNING TO EACH SIDE, SILVER STREAK RACES THROUGH THE INVADER TRENCHES, PLOWING MEN HIGH INTO VIEW!


SWISS
GERMANY
RUSSIA
RUMANIA
FRANCE
ITALY
GREECE
TURKEY
SYRIA
THEN ON THROUGH ITALY, YUGOSLAVIA, BULGARIA, RUMANIA, TURKEY AND ARABIA, LEAVING BEHIND HIM A PATH OF AMAZED PEASANTRY!

ON THE SANDS OF THE SEA MEET AN ARABIAN WOMAN SOBBING BITTERLY
HELLO!- WHAT'S THIS?

MAY I BE OF ASSISTANCE MADAM!
OH! AN AMERICAN!

IT- IT'S MY DAUGHTER! SHE HAS BEEN GIVEN TO THE CRUEL SHEIK, ALI BEN HASSEN, AS A WIFE BY MY IDLE HUSBAND IN PAYMENT OF A GAMBLING DEBT!

IF SOMEONE WOULD ONLY HELP— WHERE IS HE?
SOMEONE IS GOING TO HELP MAM!

A FEW HOURS PREVIOUS IN THE CAMP OF ALI BEN HASSEN, WE FIND HIM INDULGING IN HIS FAVORITE PASTIME FALCONRY WITH AN EVIL FRIEND ABUR TAYI
RELEASE THE PIGEONS! MY BIRD WILL FLY CIRCLES AROUND YOUR SLUGGISH BUZZARD!
SO SAY THOU!
MY FALCONRY IS WITH TRAINED WILD GAME IN ARABIA

BUT TIME AND AGAIN ABUR TAYI HATES THE POWERFUL HASSEN AND TRIES TO KILL!
HA! I'VE WON AGAIN!

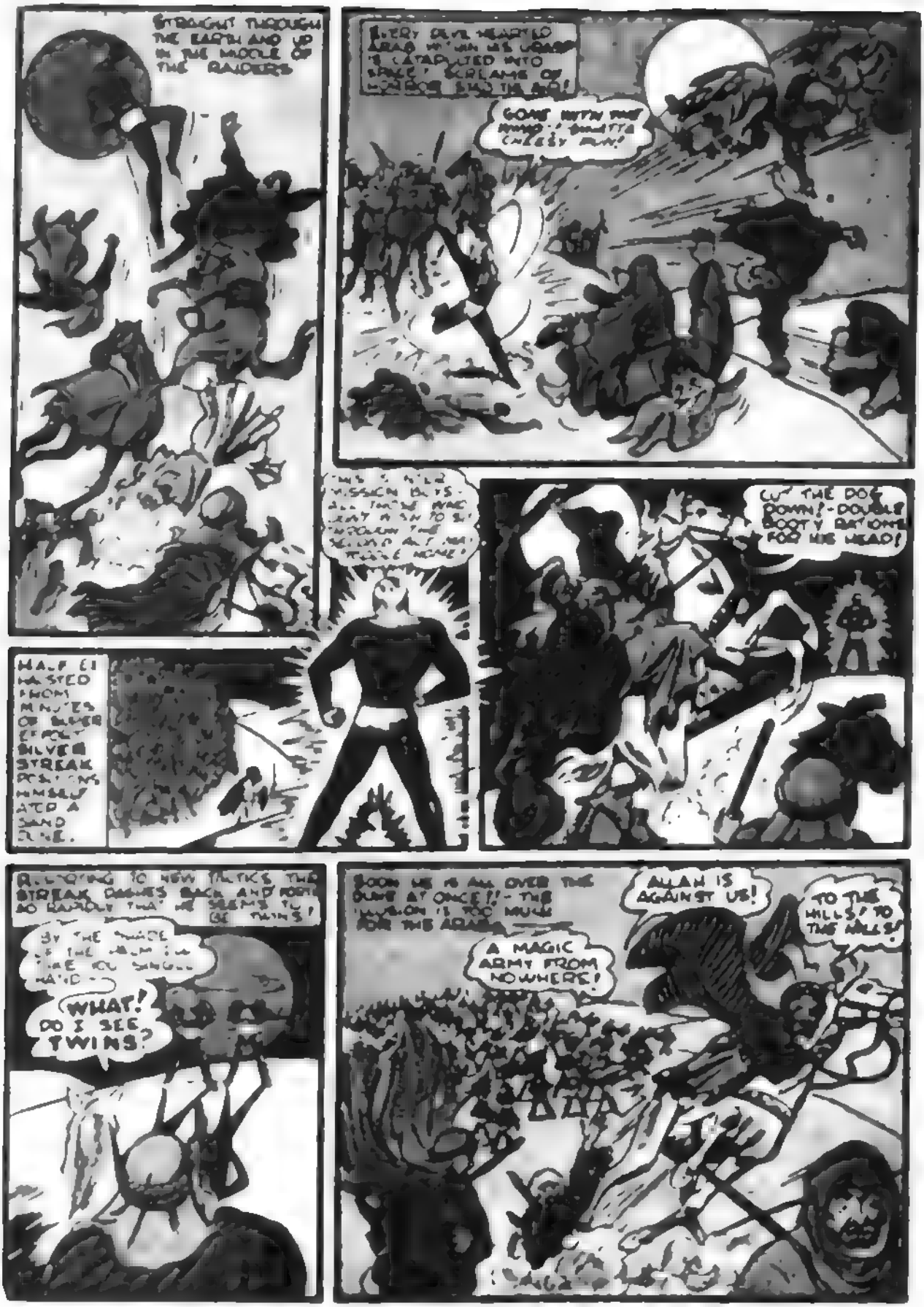
YOU MAY HAVE THE FASTEST BIRD ABUR BUT YOU'LL NEVER FIND THE EQUAL IN BEAUTY OF MY NEWEST WIFE! COME!

AH! A PRIZE INDEED!- MY LOWLY FRIEND, YOU ARE NOT AS STUPID AS YOUR UGLY FACE WOULD BETRAY!

AND NOW GOST MUST WHILE THE FLOWER OF THE DESERT DANCES!
NEVER WILL I DANCE FOR YOU PIG!!
DANCE CURSE YOU DANCE!!
NO, NO, NO!!
SUDDENLY HASSEN IS UNABLE TO STRIKE THE MAIDEN HE IS SET UPON BY HANDS UNSEEN OF THUMB-TORMENTING HIM INTO UNBRIDLED LAUGHTER
A VOICE FROM NOWHERE SPEAKS:
DANCE, MAIDEN DANCE!
NO NO HONA HA! STOP TICKLING!!
?
AS BEN HASSEN DOUBLES IN A FIT OF LAUGHTER AS SILVER STREAK STOPS HIS INVISIBLE MAGICIAN AND VANISHES THE MEN
COME BACK YOU DESPICABLE THIEF! I'LL KILL YOU FOR THIS!
ANY TRICK, IF HE HAD - HE'S NOT WORTH CHASING AFTER!
CURSE HIM! IF THERE WERE ANY MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO I'D HUNT HIM DOWN IF SPEED DIED LIKE A FALLEN DOG A DOG!
THE FRIGHTENED MAIDEN IS DRAWN IRRESISTIBLY TOWARD MELLA
WHO ARE YOU? WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME? AH, ONE YOU CALLED ME?
SILVER STREAK IS MY NAME AND BECAUSE!
TALES OF HOW GREY SILVER STREAK AND HIS LOVELY LADY AS THEY DRAIN THE CITY
OH SHADRA! LISTEN DEAR ONE IF YOU EVER CRACK! PRINCE JOHN AND ALLAN!
DO NOT BE NAUSEATED CHILD AS I AM ALONG YOUR NECK
BEFORE HE LEAVES HE'D I WANT MAKE ME A PRESENT OF ALL THOSE MUSCLES TO STRIKE ALMOST AMERICAN
THE SERVANT OF THE MASTER
WITH THE DETAILS OF THE PLANNED ATTACK KNOWN, SILVER STREAK HEADS BACK INTO THE PALACE
FAREWELL MAIDEN ONE ONE!!

SILVER STREAK WHIZZES INTO ALI BEN HASSENS CAMP & RE A DESERT HURRICANE !!
A SAND-STORM!
QUICK! TO THE SHELTER!
AT THE DESERT PIRATE'S TENT:
WHY THE SILVER-WINGED THING !!
WE SHALL WAYLAY THE CARAVAN AT KHANS ROCK NONE OF THEM SHALL LIVE TO TELL OF THE ROBBERY! I HAVE SCOUTS WATCHING FOR THEIR APPROACH
SPY!
MUD
COMPLETELY OUT OF HIS SENSES SILVER STREAK CONVULSES ABOUT MADLY, UPSETTING THE CAMP
SEIZE HIM!
BY ALLAH!
A FLYING TACKLE BY A SENTRY BRINGS HIM DOWN
AND HE IS DUMPED BEFORE ALI BEN HASSEN
A SPY NO DOUBT!
SPY INDEED! IT IS HE WHO STOLE MY WIFE! HA! WHAT TORTURES COME TO MY MIND!
BUT FIRST WE SHALL INJECT MY FALCON WITH THE BLOOD OF THIS ACCURSED DEMON! THEN I WILL HAVE THE FASTEST BIRD IN ARABIA!

IT IS DONE! NOW LET THAT DESERT RAT OSUO TAVI CHALLENGE MY BIRD! – HIS EYES WILL SURELY POP!
NOW PLACE THE INFIDEL ON THE ROASTING RACK!
MASTER! THE CARAVAN COMES!!
WE RIDE! KNIFE THE WHITE ONE AND COME IN HASTE! – A FORTUNE AWAITS US!!
AS THE SLAVE IS ABOUT TO DELIVER A DEATH BLOW, THE FALCON SPRINGS AT HIM
THE INJECTION HAS GIVEN THE FALCON A STRANGE KINSHIP WITH SILVER STREAK! – IN A BLAST OF FURY IT DRIVES OFF THE SLAVE!
IS DEMON !!
THEN LIGHTING UPON THE STREAK IT STANDS [illegible] UNTIL HE REVIVES
GOSH! – JUDGING BY THE FEATHERS, YOU'VE HAD QUITE A [illegible] BIRDIE! WHERE IS EVERY ONE ? ? – HOLY SMOKE! – THE RAID!
OUT OVER THE DESERT FLIES THE HUMAN LIGHTNING BOLT. FALCON CLOSE BEHIND
THERE THEY ARE! IT'S TIME FOR A SURPRISE!
ADJUSTING STEEL TIPS TO HIS HANDS SILVER STREAK GOES INTO A FAST SPIN AND BORES RIGHT INTO THE SAND
[illegible] TAILOR PAL!


STRAIGHT THROUGH THE EARTH AND UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE RAIDERS
EVERY DEVIL HEARTILY ABAO WITHIN HIS URGENT IS CATAPULTED INTO SPACE! SCREAMS OF HORROR END THE RAID!
GONE WITH THE WIND! I GOTTA GREASY RUN!
THIS IS WILD MISSION BUTS- ALL THOSE MAC SENT IN SH TO BE SUCCUMB THE SILVER STREAK AT HIS TOUCH MORE!
CUT THE DOG DOWN! - DOUBLE BOOT Y BAYONET FOR HIS HEAD!
HALF EI WASTED FROM MINUTES OF SUPER EFFORT SILVER STREAK PASSING HIMSELF ATOP A SAND DUNE.
RECOVERING TO NEW TACTICS THE STREAK DASHES BACK AND FORTH SO RAPIDLY THAT HE SEEMS TO BE TWINS!
BY THE POWER OF THE MOON I'M TIRE YOU SINGLE HAND -
WHAT! DO I SEE TWINS?
SOON HE IS ALL OVER THE DUNE AT ONCE!! - THE MOON IS TOO MUCH FOR THE ARABS
ALLAH IS AGAINST US!
A MAGIC ARMY FROM NOWHERE!
TO THE HILLS! TO THE HILLS!

AS THE HORSES RACE IN SCATTERED DISARRAY A MILE FROM THE DAY MONGOS AND SILVER SMOKE HE FALLS!- TRAMPLING HOOFBEATS RENDER A QUICK DEATH
THEN THE FALCON FLIES TO THE SHOULDER OF HIS HELPMATE
MY GOSH THE RACE!
CMON PAL— NOW WE'VE REALLY GOTTA TRAVEL!!
LET US TURN OUR ATTENTION TO THE NEARLY FORGOTTEN SIR CEDRIC WHO IS NEAR HIS DESTINATION IN HIS PLANE
SILVER STREAK LOST! ANOTHER ELEVEN AN THE BLOOMIN CONTEST IS OVER
YEAH MACK!
A GREAT CROWD IS AT BELMONT FIELD FOR THE FINISH!- SIR CEDRIC'S PLANE ROARS TOWARD THE FINISH LINE WHEN—
GREAT GUNS!!
IT'S SILVER STREAK!
SILVER STREAK WINS!!
EATIN' MY BLOOMIN SMART
AS THE GREAT CROWD LEAVES THE FIELD- SUDDENLY A SCREAM STARTLES THE MULTITUDE
OOOOOOOH!
WHAT'S THAT?
IT'S A MAN! HE'S DEAD!! GOOD LORD THERE'S SMOKE ROLLING FROM HIS MOUTH!!
THAT'S A MURDER!! I SAW ONE!- MURDER! BY SOME FIEND AND I'LL NOT REST UNTIL HE IS BROUGHT TO JUSTICE!!
WHAT STARTLING ADVENTURE AWAITS SILVER STREAK IN HIS INVESTIGATION OF THIS GRUESOME MURDER??— HE IS HEADING DIRECTLY INTO THE DEATH TRAP LAID FOR SOMEONE ELSE BY AN INSANE DICTATOR-MINDED ARCH-CRIMINAL!
DON'T MISS THE NEXT SILVER STREAK ADVENTURE...

MAGNO AND DAVEY
FROM THE BLACKEST MAW OF THE EVIL EARTH COMES THE CLOWN, MASTER OF THE ROTO-DYNAMO, MOST POWERFUL ENGINE OF DESTRUCTION EVER TO BE USED AGAINST MANKIND... CAN MAGNO AND DAVEY STOP THIS FIEND, OR WILL THEY TOO FALL VICTIM ALONG WITH THE REST OF AMERICA?
The CLOWN, SABOTAGE EXPERT EXTRA ORDINARY--
THE TIME FOR ACTION HAS COME---WE MUST STRIKE AT THE AIR-PLANE FACTORIES, DESTROY THEM ALL, BUT FIRST I MUST GET THEIR PLANS!
YA, YA, MASTER!
THOSE PLANS WILL BE IN THE HANDS OF SENATOR STERLING, AND HE WOULD DIE RATHER THAN GIVE THEM UP!--BUT THE CLOWN KNOWS SOMETHING TO WHICH EVEN DEATH IS PREFERABLE!

HE HAS A DAUGHTER, RIGHT? AND HE LOVES HER, RIGHT? GET IT?
JUST A LITTLE SNATCH! RIGHT? HA, HA!
I AIN'T GOIN' THROUGH WITH THIS JOB! I MAY BE A JAIL-BIRD, BUT I GOT A KID BROTHER IN THE ARMY! ROBBIN' IS ONE THING, BUT I DRAW A LINE AT SABOTAGIN UNCLE SAM!
YOU DARE DEFY THE CLOWN! STRIKE ME IF YOU DARE--PUT UP OR SHUT UP!
I WILL BUB! PLEN-- EEEEE
WE WILL NOT FAIL!
DEATH IS THE FATE OF ALL WHO DEFY ME! GO-- AND BRING ME THE SENATOR'S DAUGHTER!
IN THE DEAD OF THE NIGHT, THE CLOWN'S MEN SET OUT ON THEIR MISSION---
WE MUST CAPTURE THE GIRL OR THE CLOWN WILL KILL ALL OF US--HE HAS THE POWER OF DEATH!
WE'LL ENTRUST THESE PAPERS TO YOUR CARE, SENATOR STERLING, GUARD THEM WELL--THE ENEMY WOULD GIVE HALF OF EUROPE TO POSSESS THEM!
THESE PAPERS SHALL STAY HERE UNTIL THE PRESIDENT CALLS FOR THEM--NO ONE SHALL SEE THEM, SEELEY, NO ONE!
YES SIR! NO ONE SHALL SEE THEM, SIR!

JUST THEN JANE STERLING AND HER FIANCE TOM WEATHERLY, RETURN FROM AN EVENING AT THE THEATRE...
OKAY BOYS LET'S GET 'EM! PUT ONE IN EACH CAR!
OH! HELP!
LISTEN MAGNO, A CRY FOR HELP!
WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?
HELP!
THERE THEY GO! YOU GET THE FIRST CAR, I'LL STAY RIGHT BEHIND YOU!
RIGHT YOU ARE MAGNO!
TWO DON'T LAND NG MAGNO!
GRAB THE WHEEL AND BRING THEM TO A HALT! WE'LL FINISH THEM TOGETHER!
SNOOPERS ON TOP OF US, EH? WELL GIVE THEM A LITTLE SURPRISE!

HEY
WOW
NICE CATCH!
HAH! FOOLED THEM! THAT GAG DIDN'T WORK TWICE!
GRAB THE WHEEL, DAVEY! I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE BOYS IN THE BACK SEAT!
I'LL TAKE THE WHEEL, BUD!
THEY'RE BREAKING IN! -- IT'S MAGNO AND DAVEY!
OUT OF CONTROL AS DAVEY AND THE THUG STRUGGLE FOR THE WHEEL, THE CAR RUNS THROUGH THE RAILING OF THE BRIDGE!
SMASH
GET THE SNATCHER IN THE BACK SEAT! I'LL SQUEEZE ONE OF THE RATS AND MAKE HIM SQUEAL!
WHO'S BEHIND THIS? TALK! WHERE DID THEY TAKE THE GIRL?
BLUB-BLUB- I DON'T KNOW! OW! OW! OKAY, IT'S THE CLOWN!
JANE! JANE!
THE CLOWN, AGAIN!
AND WE THOUGHT WE WERE FINISHED WITH THAT FIEND!
20

MEANWHILE, JANE IS TAKEN TO THE CLOWN'S MAUSOLEUM HIDEOUT---
YOU'LL NEVER GET AWAY WITH THIS, YOU FUGITIVE FROM A ONE-NIGHT STAND!
WON'T I? WITH YOU IN MY GRASP, I'LL BE ABLE TO DESTROY ALL THE AMERICAN DEFENSES!--- EVERYTHING!
THE HONEST SENATOR STERLING' HIS SAFE IS IMPREGNABLE AND NO ONE KNOWS ITS COMBINATION! BUT HE KNOWS IT, AND HE SHALL OPEN IT!
THERE IT IS! MY MASTERPIECE ALL SET TO GO-- ALL I NEED IS THE EXACT LOCATION OF THE PLANTS AND SOON I SHALL HAVE THEM!
THE LETTER SAYS: "YOU WILL EITHER DELIVER THE PLANS OR YOUR DAUGHTER WILL RETURN IN A COFFIN"-- SIGNED' THE CLOWN
WHAT SHALL I DO, IT'S EITHER THE LIFE OF MY DAUGHTER OR THE SAFETY OF MY COUNTRY' HOW CAN I CHOOSE?
I WILL BE DISHONORED AND DISGRACED! I WILL BE SHOT AS A TRAITOR-- OH, BUT JANE IS TOO YOUNG TO DIE!
YES IT'S A TERRIBLE DECISION TO MAKE SENATOR BUT I'M SURE YOU'LL DO THE RIGHT THING!
GOOD NIGHT, SEELBY, THANKS FOR YOUR KINDNESS AND UNDERSTANDING!
OUTSIDE, MAGNO AND DAVEY MAINTAIN A CONSTANT VIGIL--
IF WE COULD ONLY GET A CLUE WHERE THE CLOWN IS NOW'
WE'LL FIND IT! HE HAS TO CONTACT THE SENATOR TO COLLECT THE RANSOM!

A FEW MINUTES LATER THE CLOWN SUDDENLY APPEARS AT THE SENATOR'S OFFICE--
HERE I AM SENATOR, I'M SAVING YOU THE TROUBLE OF DELIVERING THE RANSOM!
HOW DID YOU GET HERE? IS MY DAUGHTER SAFE?
JUST AS SAFE AS YOU'LL ALLOW HER TO BE!
THANK YOU, SENATOR, NOW I HAVE A LITTLE WORK TO DO! HEIL HITLER!
NOT YET MY MYSTERIOUS FRIEND!
GET HIM!
DOUBLE-CROSS ME, HUH? YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS WITH YOUR DAUGHTER'S LIFE!
THE CLOWN!
Bang Bang
A SHOT FROM THE SENATOR'S WINDOW!
IT'S THE CLOWN!
WHAT HAPPENED?
IT HAPPENED SO FAST--POOR SEELEY, THAT FIEND HAS THE TOUCH OF DEATH!
THIS WAY, DAVEY, HE CAN'T BE FAR FROM HERE!
HE'LL NEVER LEAVE THIS BUILDING!
WHERE DID HE GO?
HE WENT OUT THROUGH THE WINDOW!
NO SIGN OF HIM! D'SAPPEARED!
22

LET THEM SEARCH THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE EARTH, THEY'LL NEVER FIND ME! NOW, TO WORK! ONCE 'M IN THE MACHINE, AMERICA WILL FALL BEFORE ME!
UNTIE HER AND PUT HER INSIDE THE ROTO-DYNAMO! I'LL SHOW HER THE SEVEN HORRORS OF THE WORLD!
SUDDENLY--
BOB! WHAT'S THAT COMING FROM UNDER GROUND?
SMASHING HIS WAY FROM THE UNDERGROUND INTO THE HEART OF THE CITY, THE CLOWN DRIVES HIS ROTO-DYNAMO!
ASH
BOOM
IN A SHORT WHILE, THIS FANTASTIC INVENTION OF A MAD GENIUS WREAKS HAVOC IN THE CITY, KILLING THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE, DESTROYING MILES OF PROPERTY!---- CAN NOTHING STOP IT AS IT CUTS ITS WAY ACROSS AMERICA?

CALLING ALL CARS! CALLING ALL CARS! THE CLOWN'S HEADING FOR THE HIDDEN AIRPLANE FACTORIES ON THE NORTH SIDE! STOP IT AT ALL COSTS!
CRUSHING ALL RESISTANCE, THE MACHINE PUSHES ITS WAY ALONG THE WATERFRONT, DESTROYING DOCKS AND WAREHOUSES--!
CRASH
HA-HA! ARE YOU ENJOYING THE PRETTY SIGHT, MISS JANE? THIS IS YOUR COUNTRY GOING DOWN IN RUINS!
BOOM!
AT THIS MOMENT--
I'M SORRY, SENATOR, STERLING--I REALIZE THE CIRCUMSTANCE UNDER WHICH YOU ACTED, BUT I MUST ORDER YOUR ARREST!
I'M WILLING TO TAKE MY PUNISHMENT, CAPTAIN!
I'M AFRAID YOU WILL BE SHOT AS A TRAITOR IF ANY OF OUR SECRET MILITARY INSTALLATIONS ARE DESTROYED! THIS IS TOTAL WAR, SENATOR--I PRAY FOR YOUR SAKE THAT THE CLOWN IS STOPPED, FOR ONLY THEN WILL YOU BE SAVED!
THE CLOWN SWERVES HIS MACHINE TO ATTACK THE AIRPLANE FACTORIES ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RIVER---
HE'S HEADED THIS WAY! LET'S GO!
LET'S GO TO WORK DAVEY!
AIDED BY THE R POWERS OF MAGNETISM, THEY DRAW THEMSELVES TO THE STEEL MONSTER!
24

HANG ON, DAVEY! LET'S FIND A WAY TO GET INSIDE!
IT'S MAGNO!
YOU'RE THROUGH, CLOWN!
ATTENTION GUN TURRETS! MAGNO IS ON BOARD! OPEN FIRE AND BLAST HIM OFF!
THIS WILL FINISH THEM!
BANG! BANG! BANG!
THERE'S A COUPLE OF GUYS HANGING ON TO THE SIDE, SIR!
DON'T BOTHER WITH THEM! BLAST AWAY AT THAT INFERNAL MACHINE!
MEANWHILE, AMERICAN SOLDIERS STAND GUARD AT THE SHORE BATTERIES, READY TO DEFEND THE WAR INDUSTRIES WITH THEIR LIVES--
SWOOSH
LET'S GET UP FRONT, DAVEY-- WE HAVEN'T A CHANCE IF WE STAY HERE!
YEEOWW
DAVEY
POW
25

ARE YOU ALLRIGHT?
NOT BAD! I CAN MAKE SHORE!
HOWDY, CLOWN!
STOP THE MACHINE! GET HIM!
MAGNO!
JUST TRY AND DO IT, BOYS!
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE! I'LL GET THE CLOWN WHEN YOU RE SAFE ASHORE!
WELL, I GUESS WE SUNK HIM!
I WONDER-- HOW ARE YOU, DAVEY?
IDIOTS! FOOLS! WHY DIDN'T YOU STOP HIM? SOMEONE WILL PAY FOR THIS!
JUST SHAKEN UP, BUT OKAY!
26

HE'LL TAKE YOU BACK TO YOUR FATHER! I THINK HE'LL BE GLAD TO SEE YOU!
AND SO WILL TOM!
JANE THANK GOODNESS YOU'RE SAFE!
I CAN THANK MAGNO FOR THAT AND FOR STOPPING THE ROTO-DYNAMO BEFORE IT REACHED THE DEFENSE PLANTS!
MAGNO AND DAVEY HAVE SAVED MY LIFE TOO, FOR THE TIMEBEING. AND IF THEY CAN STOP THE ROTO-DYNAMO FOR GOOD, EVEN MY REPUTATION AND POSITION, IMPORTANT AS LIFE ITSELF, WILL BE SAVED!
MEANWHILE, MAGNO AND DAVEY ARE ON THE TRAIL OF THE CLOWN!
THE MACHINE CAME UP OUT OF HERE--LETS FOLLOW ITS TRAIL!
GOOD IDEA, THAT MAY LEAD US RIGHT TO THE CLOWN'S LAIR!
WE MUST DESTROY MAGNO AND DAVEY--SO LONG AS THEY LIVE, THEY STAND IN THE WAY OF THE COMPLETION OF OUR PLANS!
HELLO SKUNKS, WHAT DUNKS!
MAGNO AND DAVEY! WE WERE JUST DISCUSSING YOU!
HERE COMES THE STAMPEDE, DAVEY!
LET 'ER BUCK!
KILL THEM, DESTROY THEM!
27

HAVE A HANDFUL OF KNUCKLES!
HIT ME, YOU LITTLE RUNT! HIT ME ALL YOU LIKE!
THAT'S JAKE, SNAKE!
POW
WHAT'S THIS? MY TOUCH OF DEATH FAILED ME!
WE'RE ON TO YOUR TRICKS-- YOU'VE GOT ELECTRIC WIRING SEWED INSIDE YOUR BLOUSE--THAT'S WHAT CAUSED THE TOUCH OF DEATH, BUT ELECTRICITY HAS NO EFFECT ON MAGNETIC HANDS!
TAKE THIS ON YOUR MAGNETIC HEAD!
BAM
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, DAVEY? WHAT HAPPENED?
NOTHING MUCH! COME ON! WE MUSTN'T LET HIM GET AWAY!

THERE HE GOES!
JUST WAIT TILL I GET THAT GUY AGA N!
THIS UNDERGROUND SHOP WILL BE YOUR TOMB!
JUMP FOR IT, DAVEY.. HE'S SHOOTING THE WORKS!
BOOM
WHEW, THAT WAS SOME BLAST! WHERE'S THE CLOWN!
OVER THERE! OUT COLD!
I'LL GET THE POLICE TO COME AND GET HIM!
YES, I'LL WAIT HERE JUST IN CASE!
LATER..
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY!
ALL OF US CAN THANK MAGNO AND DAVEY FOR EVERYTHING!
AND THAT ENDS THE CASE OF "THE CLOWN", BOYS AND GIRLS.. I GUESS HE LEARNED IN THE END, AS ALL THE ENEMIES OF AMERICA LEARN, THAT THIS LAND OF OURS IS TOO BIG AND STRONG TO BE TAMPERED WITH!
THAT'S RIGHT, AND IF YOU PUT YOUR SPARE MONEY INTO WAR STAMPS AND BONDS, YOU'LL BE HELPING TO KEEP IT THAT WAY!
MAGNO AND DAVEY WILL BE BACK WITH MORE THRILLS AND ADVENTURES IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF 4 Favorites
29

AIRBOY
IS AIRBOY A COWARD? CAN IT BE THAT HE HAS COME FACE TO FACE WITH FEAR? --NOT THE ORDINARY FEAR THAT OTHER MEN KNOW--BUT A TERROR THAT SCORCHES THE LIVING HEART.... FOR THIS FEAR IS NOT UGLY --IT IS BEAUTIFUL -- AS BEAUTIFUL AS A GIRL WHO CALLS HERSELF VALKYRIE! SHE IS NOT HUMAN --HER HEART IS AS BLACK AS THE DEVIL'S.... AND UNDER HER SPELL, AIRBOY FACES THE MOST TERRIFYING ADVENTURE OF HIS CAREER!!
KIDA
QUACKENBUSH

AIRBOY MEETS VALKYRIE

Air Fighters Comics vol. 2 no. 2 (November, 1943)

NIGHT--A SQUADRON OF NAZI SHIPS KNIFE. THROUGH THE DARKNESS TOWARDS LONDON--
ACHTUNG! WE ARE APPROACHING OUR OBJECTIVE! PREPARE FOR ACTION!
AT AN R.A.F. AIRFIELD, OUTSIDE LONDON---
LOOK! A PACK OF "MESSIES"! UP AND AT 'EM, BOYS! SEND UP THE INTERCEPTORS!
YES S.IR! HERE WE COME, SAUERKRAUTS! IF YOU KNOW ANY PRAYERS--BETTER START SAYIN' 'EM!
THE NAZIS DIVE FOR THE AIRFIELD!
KILL DER VERDAMMTE BR.T.SHERS! DON'T LET 'EM LEAVE THE GROUND!
HEIL HITLER! KILL FOR DER FUEHRER!
HA-HA! THIS IS LIKE TAK.NG CANDY FROM A BABY!
YEOW! THESE BLIGHTERS CAN FLY BLAST THEM!
IT'S TOO LATE, MEN! THEY'VE DONE THE R DAMAGE, AND THEY'RE GETTING AWAY! GAD! I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH FLY NG!--
ACHTUNG! WE HAVE DONE WELL! THERE IS NO BR TISH SQUADRON TO COMPARE WITH OURS! BACK TO THE BASE!
AS THE VICTORIOUS NAZIS COME TO THE AIRFIELD--
AH! HERE DEY COME! LET'S HEAR HOW DEY HAPP DONE!
2

HEIL HITLER! HOW HAVE WE DONE TONIGHT, VALKYRIE?
EXCELLENTLY, HERR OBERST! WE STRAFED THE FIELD AND SHOT DOWN TWENTY OF THEIR CRAFT!
VONDERBAR! DEN MY AIRMAIDEN SQUADRON IS A SUCCESS! WE SHALL SHOW DER WORLD THE TYPE OF GERMANHOOD GERMANY HAS!
YES! AND I, VALKYRIE, SHALL BE THE GREAT MASTER OF THE AIR!
I SHALL FACE AIRBOY AS THE CREAM OF GERMAN YOUTH!-- WE SHALL SEE HOW INVINCIBLE HE IS--HA!
INDEED! YOU ARE A TRUE GERMAN! UND I HAFF MOULDED YOU INTO A GREAT FLIER! DER FUEHRER IS PLEASED!
THANK YOU! MY LIFE BELONGS TO THE FUEHRER! HE IS OUR SUN!
LOOK! UP IN THE SKY! COMING THIS WAY!
WHY-- IT'S-- IT'S---
IT'S AIRBOY!
LOOK OUT! DIVE FOR COVER!
CURSE HIM! HOW DID HE GET HERE?
THIS IS THE SQUADRON THAT PULLED THAT SNEAK JOB! I FOLLOWED THEM ALL THE WAY HERE! --AND NOW I'M PAYING BACK!

AHA! AT LAST! AIRBOY! NOW I CAN PROVE WHO IS THE WORLD'S GREATEST YOUTH!
HERE I COME, WEAK YANKEE AIRBOY!
HERE'S ONE NAZ. THAT'LL NEVER GET OFF THE GROUND AGAIN!
BUT AS AIRBOY DIVES FOR HIS MARK, THE PLANE SUDDENLY SWERVES, AND HE OVERSHOOTS IT BADLY---
HA! FELL FOR IT, YOU FOOL!
WHA?? NEVER EXPECTED THAT!
THE NAZI SHIP TAKES OFF ON AIRBOY'S TAIL, AND---
HERE'S A TASTE OF HOT GERMAN LEAD!
OH! OH! HE'S WINGED US, BIRDIE!
SUDDENLY THE AMAZING BIRD-PLANE STOPS, AND RISES STRAIGHT UPWARD....
I'VE GOT A COUPLE OF TRICKS MYSELF!
HEAVENS! WHAT A PLANE!..IT GOES STRAIGHT UP!-- STOPS ON A SPOT!
AIRBOY RELEASES THE WHEELS, AND BIRDIE GETS THE NAZI SHIP IN ITS GRASP....
YOU'RE JUST STARTING TO SEE THINGS, MISTER!
WHA?!---I'M TRAPPED!! THE DEVIL---!
4

WHILE ON THE GROUND---
LOOK! HER PLANE CAN'T GET AWAY! HE'S CLIMBING DOWN TO HER PLANE!
VOT ARE YOU STANDING AROUND GAPING FOR? GET UP INTO DER AIR! HELP HER!
--AND IN THE AIR---
O.K. KRAUT! I'M TAKING OVER HERE! AND YOU'RE GOING TO DO SOME WALKING ON AIR!
WHY!! --IT'S --IT'S A GIRL!
YES! BUT A GIRL WHO CAN WHIP ANY MAN!
OOO... YOU'RE A SHE-DEVIL, EH?
O.K. YOU FEMALE KNOCKWURST! I'M THROUGH PLAYING GAMES!
OH-OH-- MORE PLANES! O.K., BEAUTIFUL! CALL OFF YOUR PACK OF WOLVES!
HA! LIKE FUN I WILL! YOU HAVEN'T THE NERVE TO SHOOT! I'M TAKING YOU IN AS A PRISONER! YOU ARE SURROUNDED!
WHAT A MESS! AND I CAN'T BRING MYSELF DOWN TO SHOOTING A GIRL!
ANOTHER AMERICAN WEAKLING!--YOU'LL HAVE TO SHOOT SOONER OR LATER TO SAVE YOUR OWN SKIN!
5

SERR GOOT, VALKYRIE! YOU HAVE CAPTURED AIRBOY! --UND DER BIRD-PLANE!!
YES! BUT I HAVE FAILED TO PROVE A SUPERIOR FLYER! THAT IS BECAUSE HE HAD A BETTER PLANE!
BUT NOW THE TABLES ARE TURNED! I SHALL FLY THE BIRD-PLANE AGAINST AIRBOY!!!
YOU'LL NEVER LEARN TO FLY BIRDIE! I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS HER SECRETS!
OH YES? THEN I SHALL HAVE TO WHIP THOSE SECRETS OUT OF YOU! TAKE HIM TO THE CELL!
AIRBOY IS LED TO A LARGE DUNGEON AND CHAINED TO A POST....
FOR THE LAST TIME! WILL YOU TALK?
NO! NEVER!!
I CAN'T LET THEM HAVE THE SECRET! BIRDIE WOULD BE DEADLY IN THEIR HANDS!
PERHAPS A COUPLE OF LASHES WILL LOOSEN YOUR TONGUE!--
OOOOO...
WHY YOU BLACK-HEARTED---OOOO--!
GOTTA HOLD OUT-- CAN'T GIVE--THEM-- ANY--INFORMATION--
BAH! THIS IS DOING NO GOOD! HE IS A STUBBORN ONE!
YES! I'M GETTING TIRED

OOH! IT'S INHUMAN! HE IS SO BRAVE! LOOK HOW HE HOLDS HIS HEAD HIGH!!
YES, SO BRAVE AND SO VERY HANDSOME! I CAN'T BEAR TO WATCH!
SNAP!
BAH! DER STUBBORN MULE! TOMORROW HE SHALL LOOSEN UP ON DER RACK! TAKE HIM AWAY!
YA, MEIN HERR!
LATER THAT NIGHT--
O-O-O MY BACK HO-OH!!
WH--WHAT'S THAT??
QUICKLY! WE MUST NOT BE DISCOVERED!
AIRBOY! QUICK! WE HAVE COME TO GET YOU AWAY!
WHAT?? IS THIS ANOTHER NAZI TRICK?
NO! WE WANT TO HELP YOU! THERE IS NO TIME TO ARGUE!
WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? I COULDN'T BE ANY WORSE OFF!
COME! WE CAN HIDE YOU IN THE OLD DESERTED HANGAR!
A FEW MOMENTS LATER--
WHA'--WHO CAN BE CALLING AT DIS INFERNAL HOUR OF DER NIGHT?
R-R-R-R-RING!

VOT? DUMBKOPFS! HOW COULD HE HAFF ESCAPED? HE COULD NOT UNLESS YOU VAS ASLEEP! VAIT! I VILL BE RIGHT DERE!
BUT VE CAN'T UNDERSTAND! SOMEONE MUST HAFF HELPED HIM!
VELL, IF HE ISS NOT FOUND, YOU SHALL TAKE HIS PLACE ON DER RACK! VAIT! VOT ISS DIS??
QUIET! WE MUST NOT AWAKE THE OTHERS! WE WOULD BE SHOT!
THE LIGHTS! WHO--OHH!
HA! SO IT VAS YOU! VERE HAFF YOU HIDDEN AIRBOY? SPEAK UP!
VE DON'T KNOW VOT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT!
WHAT HAS HAPPENED?
AIRBOY HASS ESCAPED! UND YOUR FRIENDS HERE WERE JUST CAUGHT PROWLING! WELL, GIRLS,..VERE ISS HE?
VE DO NOT KNOW, I TELL YOU--OOPF!!
FOOL! TRAITOR! TELL HIM QUICKLY!
PAH! I VILL NOT HAFF SENTIMENTAL FOOLS IN MY SQUADRON! TAKE THEM AVAY! IN DER MORNING DEY VILL BE WHIPPED!
THEY'RE MY FRIENDS! I MUST HELP THEM! HMM--I THINK I KNOW WHERE THEY WOULD HIDE AIRBOY!

YOU! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
AHA! SO YOU ARE HERE? JUST AS I THOUGHT!... YOU HAVE A WAY WITH THE WOMEN, EH, ARBOY?
QUIT THE DOUBLE-TALK AND TELL ME HOW YOU FOUND OUT I WAS HERE? WHY DON'T YOU TURN ME IN?
I HAVE A BETTER USE FOR YOU! THE GIRLS ARE TO BE WHIPPED! IF YOU TELL ME HOW TO FLY YOUR PLANE, I CAN FREE THEM!
SO THAT'S IT! NUTS TO YOU, SISTER! HOW DO I KNOW YOU'D FREE THEM?
BUT THOSE GIRLS ARE MY FRIENDS! I AM TELLING THE TRUTH -- HERE!
THIS IS TO SEAL THE BARGAIN!
WHEW!
O.K., SISTER! YOU WIN! I OWE IT TO THOSE GIRLS! BUT IF YOU DOUBLE-CROSS ME, I SWEAR I'LL KILL YOU!
DON'T WORRY, I WON'T! AND NOW- THE INSTRUCTIONS!
SOON....
THE GALLANT FOOL! NOW I KNOW THE SECRETS OF THE BIRD-PLANE! I HATE HAVING TO GET RID OF ARBOY! THAT KISS WAS NICE!

THE NEXT MORNING--
GOOD MORNING, HERR OBERST!
OH--ER-COME IN, VALKYRIE!
HERR OBERST, COULD YOU DO ME A VERY SPECIAL FAVOR?
ER-UH, VY OF COURSE! VOT ISS IT?
FIRST, LET ME KISS YOU, YOU GREAT BIG HANDSOME BRUTE!
WH-
GULP!
AND NOW, "HONEY"!.. YOU WOULDN'T REFUSE ME IF I ASKED YOU TO RELEASE THOSE THREE GIRLS?
OH--! SO!-- NO-NO-NO NO-- NO! YOU ARE PLAYING WIT' ME! NO! I WON'T FORGET MY DUTY!
AND IF I WERE TO TELL YOU WHERE AIRBOY IS? WOULD YOU LET THEM GO THEN?
AIRBOY? YOU KNOW VERE HE IS? VY DIDN'T YOU SAY SO? OF COURSE I'LL DO IT! TELL ME WHERE HE IS! QUICK!
HURRY! HE IS AT THE OLD DESERTED HANGAR-- BRING HIM IN BEFORE HE HAS A CHANCE TO GET AWAY!
OH YES, VALKYRIE, I FORGOT TO MENTION, THE GIRLS ARE ALREADY BEING TAKEN OUT ON THE FIELD! IT IS TOO LATE TO STOP IT!
BUT-- YOU PROMISED!!
--THEY SHALL BE WHIPPED IN FRONT OF THE REST OF THE GIRLS AS AN EXAMPLE! WE MUST HAVE DISCIPLINE AT ALL COSTS! AND AIRBOY SHALL BE SHOT AS AN EXTRA ATTRACTION!

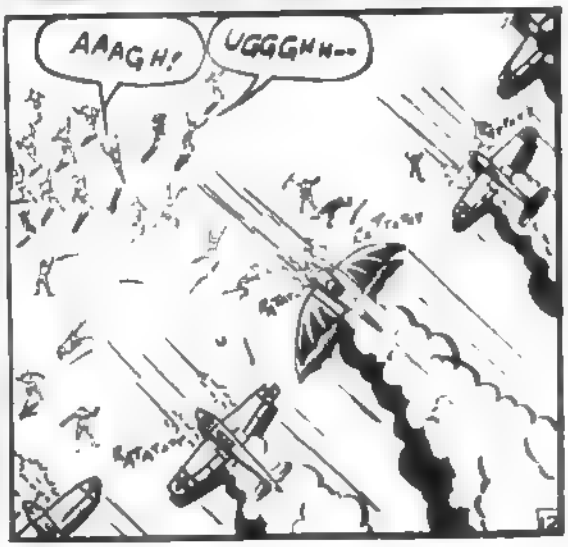
SO! THIS IS THE MASTER WHO TRAINED ME TO BE A GOOD NAZI! NOW I CAN SEE THE EVIL OF MY TRICKY WAYS! WELL, WHILE I CAN STILL CHANGE, I WILL!
BANG
Oooo o.
DEATH TO YOU! AND THE OTHER NAZI WAYS OF LIFE!
I'VE GOT TO STOP THE BUTCHERS!
NOW I CAN PUT TO USE THE INFORMATION AIRBOY GAVE ME... AND HELP HIM!
FROM THE BIRD-PLANE, VALKYRIE LOOKS DOWN--
THERE THEY ARE!
WHEN I DROP MY HAND, COMMENCE! TEN LASHES EACH FOR DER GIRLS! DEATH FOR AIRBOY! READY!

NOW--OOOo.!
OOOo
AAAAA-!
DIE BUTCHERS!
WHAT TH-?! IT'S BIRDIE -- WHO--

COME ON, GIRLS! RELEASE THE PRISONERS! WE'VE BEEN ON THE WRONG SIDE! YOU SAW WHAT THEY WERE GOING TO DO TO SOME OF US---
YES! DOWN WITH THE MURDERERS! WE'RE WITH YOU, VALKYRIE!

IN A MOMENT THE "AIRMAIDENS" ARE IN THEIR SHIPS!
FORGIVE ME, AIRBOY! I'VE BEEN A FOOL!
THAT'S ALL RIGHT, VAL! I'M GLAD I TOLD YOU THOSE SECRETS! YOU CAME IN HANDY!

JUST THEN, NAZI SOLDIERS RUN UP---
SHTOP! VOT ISS DOT?
ALL RIGHT, GIRLS! HERE WE GO!


AAAGH!
UGGGHH--

THE SQUADRON TAKES TO THE AIR!
WELL, VALKYRIE, YOU'VE SAVED MY LIFE! THAT MAKES UP FOR THE WHIPPING!
NO IT DOESN'T! I CAN NEVER MAKE UP FOR THAT! IT WAS ALL A PART OF THE BARBARISM THAT WAS WRONGLY TAUGHT US!
SUDDENLY FROM ABOVE--
YEOW! LOOK! PLANES! THEY'VE COME AFTER US FROM THE BASE!
ALL RIGHT, GIRLS!! USE EVERY TRICK-- --FOR FREEDOM!
AND WITH NAZI BROTHER AGAINST SISTER, THE FIGHT IS ALL THE MORE BITTER.... BUT AIRBOY AND THE ARMADENS STEADILY GRIND THEIR ENEMY OUT OF THE SKY....
THEN--
WE'VE LICKED THEM! AND NOW-- ON TO ENGLAND TO FIGHT FOR A REAL CAUSE! OH AIRBOY-- I'M SO THRILLED!
G-GOSH! ME TOO!! WE SHOULD DO THIS MORE OFTEN!
WOW! WAIT'LL YOU SEE IT!! WE MEAN THE NEW AIRBOY THRILLER!
IN NEXT MONTH'S AIR FIGHTERS COMICS!
GET YOUR COPY EARLY!

an ammunitions ship and to be on the look out for sabotage. It seems that Higgins was also an amateur research scientist who had experiemented for years in search of a chemical which, if absorbed in the proper parts of the body, would transform an ordinary person into a super-human being. Working with his son, Joe, he at last found the right mixture, but had to postpone any new experiments until his current assignment was completed.

This he was not destined to do. The ammo ship to which he had been assigned was destroyed in an act of sabotage and Lt. Higgins mortally wounded. Later, in a hospital room in the presence of his son and his best friend, J. Edgar Hoover, Higgins gasped out his anatomy formula, a code combination of letters in this order: S-H-I-E-L-D

Young Joe didn't understand the formula but filled with grief and an intense desire to serve his country in his father's stead, he devoted himself to a deep study of chemistry. He finished college with the highest rating ever achieved in the subject, and then spent several more years completing his father's experiment. He perfected every part of it except the most important; the meaning of the anatomical formula s-h-i-e-l-d. Then one day, quite by accident, as he was leafing through a medical book, Joe found it—a drawing of the human body that revealed the important parts to which the letters of the formula referred. Interpreted, it read thusly:

S-Sacrum, the spinal center of the body.
H-Heart, the pump of the body
I-Innervation, the nerve center of the body
E-Eyes, the power of sight
L-Lungs, the control of respiration
D-Derma, the skin covering of the body

Joe hurried back to his laboratory and donned a special skin-tight fibrometallic suit, an invention of his own which was designed to help his pores absorb the chemical. He rubbed the parts of his anatomy the formula specified, then lay perfectly still for 12 hours as fluoroscopic rays forced the chemical into the particular organs. The result; one of the most powerful and formidable forces for freedom this country has ever seen, The mighty Shield

Joe revealed his secret to his father's old friend, the chief of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, who granted him a G-Man commision, and thus was begun an arrangement by which The Shield, through special assignments, cavorted through pulse-pounding adventures to the delight of comic fans of the early forties.

The Shield proved so popular that his stories were upped to 13 pages each issue starting with #6, July 1940. The artist who was selected to do the Shield was one of the best, and still is, Irving Novick. Novick had a very tight style during 1940-41. Figures were drawn to near perfection. People looked like people. There was no crudeness in the art like many other artists suffered. Bodies, faces, everything was well drawn. Novick swiped from no one, a rare thing in itself, since at that time, even the best artists were not beyond swiping from Foster or Raymond.

In *Pep #4* The Wizard/Mosconian battle found it's way into The Shield story. Soon supporting characters began to appear. The first was Betty Warren, whom The Shield rescued in #6 after her father, a US Senator, was murdered by enemy agents. She became Joe Higgin's sweetheart. Next came Ju Ju Watson in #9 as the comic relief (MLJ may have been one of the pioneers in providing humor in a serious strip) In #18, Ju Ju's dizzy girl friend Mamie Mazda joined the group. These three, getting into all sorts of trouble, really kept The Shield moving. Perhaps it was a little bit more than one guy, even a super guy, could handle because when *Pep #11* January 1941, hit the stands, the first thing the readers saw was the cover and on it was a young boy in costume fighting side by side with The Shield. A cover blurb read: EXTRA!! NEW!! Dusty the Boy Detective with The Shield. Inside, FBI Agent Joe Higgins, Ju Ju and Betty were investigating a sabotage case in an airplane factory when a plane blew up on take off. A young red-headed boy rushed to the burning plane only to find that one of the dead victims was his father. Joe comforted the boy. Later, as the boy was strolling into a hanger, he came across some men beating up on Betty and forgetting his own grief, rushed to her aid. Then Joe, as The Shield, joined the fight. Later we learned that the leader behind the sabotage is a robed figure called The Vulture. After that run in with The Vulture, Dusty tells the Shield he wants to fight crime and be like him when he grows up but The Shield told him he thinks they would make a great team right now. Going to the Shield's laboratory, they made a costume for Dusty. So entered The Boy Detective. Needless to say, The Vulture and his gang got their just reward in the end.

While Dusty was the Shield's partner, he never had any powers of his own, nor did he ever have a last name. His familiar red and blue costme was yellow and blue in that origin issue.

Over the next few issues, the superpowered Shield, his pal Dusty and friends Ju Ju, Betty and Mamie went about their business fighting crime, meeting up with The Vulture again in *Pep #18*. As the number twenties rolled by, a big change was about to happen in The Shield's way of life. Minor changes in costume had started to appear around #27 and #28. With #28, Betty, Ju Ju and Mamie made their last appearance and finally in #29 July 1942, it happened. First of all, the reader noticed right off that The Shield was wearing blue trunks for the first time and that the art had the swinging free-for-all, Kirby effect. In the story itself, the reader found The Shield and Dusty approaching a deserted shack by the waterfront, looking for a Japanese spy Nest. Discovering a secret room, they attacked and a shot rang out. But something then happened that never happened before. After 28 issues, the incredible happened, the bullet struck and The Shield cried out, "Oooh—I've been hit-every-everything is going black." Yes for the first time The Shield was stunned by a bullet. Dusty asked what had happened to which the Shield replied, "I'm not sure myself, but I suspect that the formula of my father's which gave me my strength is wearing off." Rushing back to his lab, The Shield tells Dusty his origin which marked the third and possibly last time the origin was ever told. After going through a number of tests, The Shield learns the truth: all his superpowers are gone. But there was little time to do anything about it, the Japanese Spies had to be stopped, superpowers or no superpowers.

IN A CORNER OF THE ALLEY JOE HIGGINS OPENS HIS BRIEF CASE AND...
-AND SO THE SHIELD WILL GO INTO ACTION ON ANOTHER FRONT.
...A MOMENT LATER, IN HIS STARTLING UNIFORM, HIGGINS BECOMES THE DREADED SHIELD!

Losing his powers was not the only change to take place. Irving Novick's art had made a drastic change also. Gone was the tight detailed art of 1940-41 and in its place a new fast-moving style in the Simon and Kirby tradition. During the change-over in #29 and #30, Novick's name was missing from the stories but it was back with #31.

Now The Shield had to go up against a Japanese costumed hero known as The Fang, who feared no one. Even without any of his powers, The Shield was more than a match for The Fang as he and Dusty and the Police cleaned up the spies. Back at his lab The Shield once again went through the steps to regain his powers.

In #30, the experiment was completed, but it was a failure and The Shield was still powerless. The Shield wasn't licked, the fight would be tougher but he and Dusty vowed to fight as long as there was a spark of breath left. In #30 they met The Strangler for the first time. The Strangler was a German costumed character as ruthless as they come and a great painter as well. After his first real test without superpowers, The Shield defeated The Strangler and turned him over to the police.

In #31, The Strangler joined forces with a tommy gun artist named The Snowbird and escaped prison. The escape was soon discovered. After a number of battles between the Shield and Dusty and The Strangler and Snowbird and his tommy gun, The Strangler plunged to his death into the ocean and The Snowbird was returned to prison.

In issue #33 November 1942, The Shield's superpowers, temporarily returned when at the end of the story he and Dusty and a professor and his daughter are about to be tortured by Germans. The Shield, Exerting superhuman strength, burst his bonds, smashed into the Germans, broke Dusty's chains with his bare hands and then picked up both the professor and his daughter and crashed through the wall of the burning building. Was it just a flash or had the Shield's superpowers returned? That was the last time his superpowers ever returned although they were mentioned by The Shield from time to time in later stories.

By issue #34, the words "America's Fastest Growing Comic Magazine" began to appear on the covers and these words continued to appear on most covers for the next ten issues.

But, as each issue passed, it was becoming more and more apparent that The Shield was no longer the real star. He was slowly losing ground to the freckle-faced teenager, Archie Andrews.

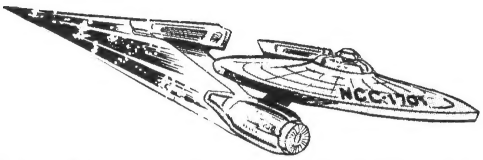
Archie Andrews and The Gang made their debut in *Pep* #22, December 1941. I don't think anyone needs to be introduced to Archie and his friends Betty, Veronica and Jughead. This was the first and best strip of its kind, and still is. Archie got more popular as each issue came out. Originally drawn by Bob Montana and later by "Red" Holmadale and then Harry Sahle, Archie started to make his move with issue #36, February 1943, when he appeared on the cover for the first time. It was a beautiful cover with Shield, Hangman and Archie hand and hand in a winter scene. He didn't appear on the cover again till #41, August 1943, and now he was there to stay. Gone were the great Shield and Hangman covers of 1940-42. Now Archie was front and center with The Shield playing second banana on all the covers. The Shield was able to hang onto the covers till #49, which was his last cover appearance.

Inside Archie was not able to dislodge The Shield from the lead story till #49. With #49, Archie took over the lead story for good although The Shield still hung in there with longer stories from time-to-time until he finally had to call it quits after #65, January 1948.

The Shield was drawn mostly by Irving Novick but for awhile during 1944-45, the art was by Clem Harrison and Sam Burlockoff. Other artists over the years were Al Camerata, Harry Sahle (mostly covers) and Bobby King. Most stories were written by Harry Shorten.

The inside front cover of every issue of *Pep* starting with #15 was devoted to The Shield G-Man Club where Joe Higgin's always had Bulletins printed telling news, listing new members and such. You could join the club for one thin dime which would get you an Identification Card and a metal pin-button badge. After issue #65 The Shield G-Man Club became The Archie Club.

NEXT: THE REST OF MLJ!!



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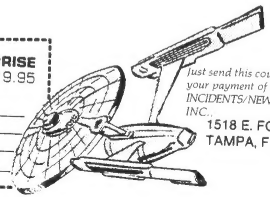

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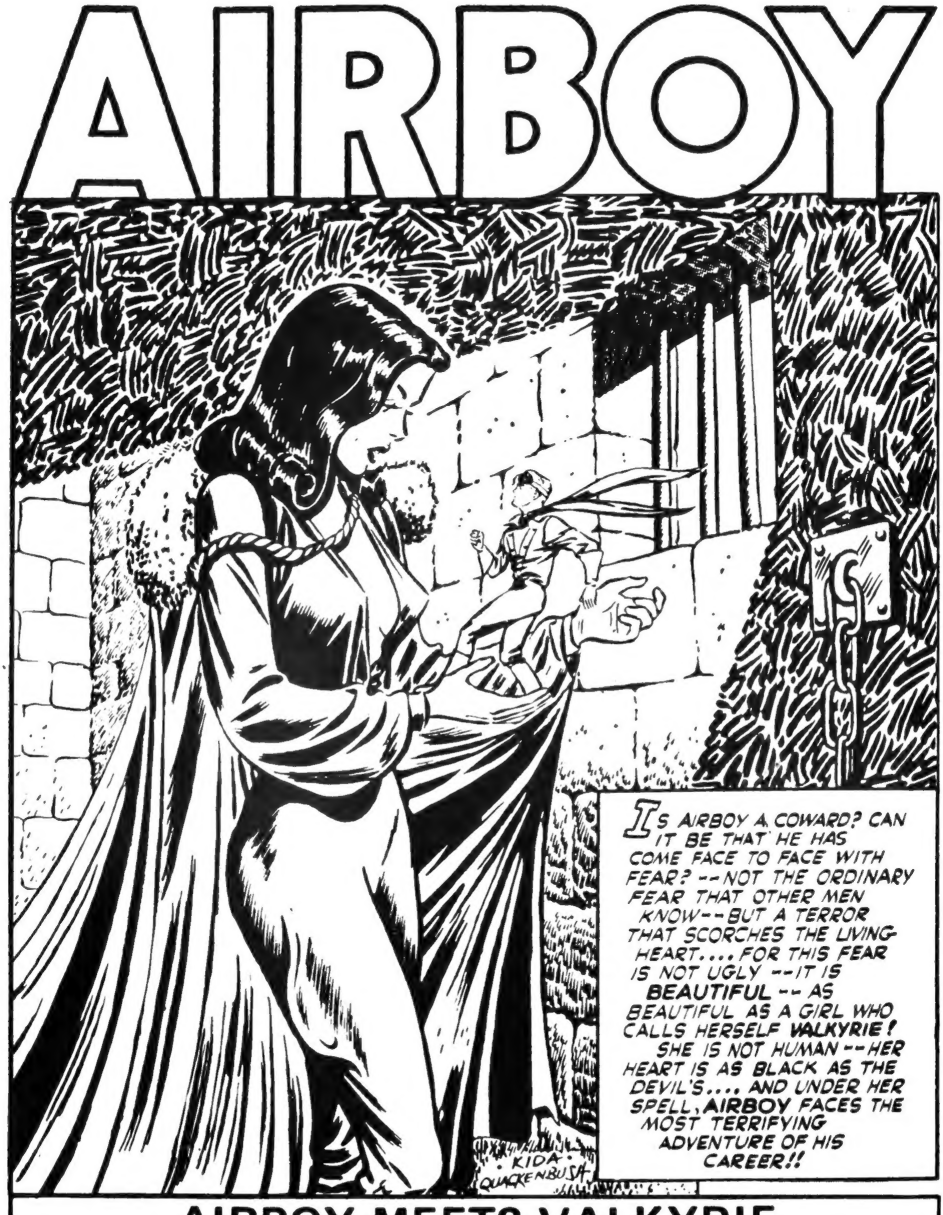
AIRBOY
IS AIRBOY A COWARD? CAN IT BE THAT HE HAS COME FACE TO FACE WITH FEAR? --NOT THE ORDINARY FEAR THAT OTHER MEN KNOW--BUT A TERROR THAT SCORCHES THE LIVING HEART.... FOR THIS FEAR IS NOT UGLY --IT IS BEAUTIFUL -- AS BEAUTIFUL AS A GIRL WHO CALLS HERSELF VALKYRIE! SHE IS NOT HUMAN --HER HEART IS AS BLACK AS THE DEVIL'S.... AND UNDER HER SPELL, AIRBOY FACES THE MOST TERRIFYING ADVENTURE OF HIS CAREER!!
KIDA
QUACKENBUSH

AIRBOY MEETS VALKYRIE

Air Fighters Comics vol. 2 no. 2 (November, 1943)